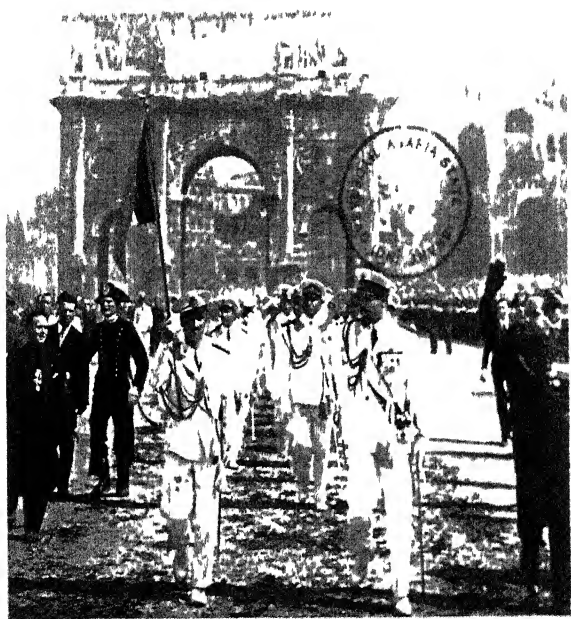


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MY AIR ARMADA



ALTER PASSING UNDER THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE

MY AIR ARMADA

By
AIR MARSHAL ITALO BALBO

Translated from the Italian
by
GERALD GREEN

With 44 Illustrations in Pencil and Colours



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE SELECTION OF AIR BASES FOR THE FLIGHT	11
THE AIR ARMADA'S FLYING-BOAT	30
MUSSOLINI AND THE KING OF ITALY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF THE FLIGHT	43
A MINOR ACCIDENT	47
ADVENTURES OF THE <i>Alice</i>	53
AIR MARSHAL BALBO CRASHES	60
FLYING OVER THE ALPS	70
THE AMSTERDAM FATAL CRASH	79
THE FLIGHT OVER ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND	89
THE AIR ARMADA IN IRELAND	98
PERILS OF THE FLIGHT TO ICELAND	111
A GAY TIME IN ICELAND	119
IN THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN	126
FLYING THE OCEAN	136
IN LABRADOR AND MONTREAL	155
THE AIR ARMADA IN CHICAGO	173
IN NEW YORK	196
NEW YORK'S TRIBUTE TO AIR MARSHAL BALBO	209
ANXIOUS DAYS IN NEWFOUNDLAND	223
FATAL CRASH AT THE AZORES	245
HOME AT LAST	262
A ROMAN TRIUMPH	270
INDEX	281

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Is this page PAGE PAGE</i>
AFTER PASSING UNDER THE ARCH OF CONSTANTINE	16
AL ORBELLITO	17
THE S. 55 AL ORBELLITO	17
REAR VIEW OF A FLYING-BOAT'S ENGINE DURING FIGHT	17
THE CABIN OF AIR MARSHAL BALBO'S CRUIER	44
BALBO AND LIEUT. COLONEL CAGNAC ON BOARD THE COMMANDER'S CRUIER	44
THE KING AL ORBELLITO	45
A GIANT ICEBERG	54
THE <i>Alce</i> ICE BOUND IN GRINGET BAY	54
OFFICERS AND CREWS OF THE ARMADA	55
THE FLIGHT OVER THE ALPS	72
THE AIR ARMADA FLYING OVER THE ALPS	73
CAPTAIN BALDINI'S FLYING-BOAT AFTER THE FATAL CRASH AT AMSTERDAM	80
AIR-MARSHAL BALBO AND LORD LONDONBERRY	81
A WIRELESS OPERATOR AT WORK	138
FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH FOG	138
DISSEMBARKING AT REYKJAVIK	139
THE ARMADA REACHES REYKJAVIK	139
BALBO FROM THE <i>Alce</i> WELCOMES THE LAST PLATOON OF THE ARMADA AS IT ARRIVES AT CARIWRIGHT	156
THE HYDROPLANTS AT ANCHOR IN CARIWRIGHT BAY	156
IN SHIDMAC BAY	157
ON THE WOODEN SHIPWAY AT SHIDMAC	157
THE ARMADA FLYS OVER THE CHICAGO EXHIBITION	174
THE FLYING-BOATS ANCHORED AT CHICAGO	175
MAJOR KELLY OF CHICAGO PRESENTS BALBO WITH THE SYMBOLICAL KEYS OF THE CITY	17

	FACING PAGE
ITALIAN AND AMERICAN GIRLS GIVE FLOWERS TO PILOTS OF ATLANTIC FLIGHT	198
AIR-MARSHAL BALBO IS PROCLAIMED A CHIEF OF THE SIOUX INDIANS ON JULY 17TH	198
THE ARMADA FLIES OVER NEW YORK	199
BALBO REVIEWS AMERICAN GUARD OF HONOUR AT WASHINGTON CAMP	210
THE ATLANTIC FLIERS AT THE MONUMENT TO THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER AT WASHINGTON	210
BALBO AND WILEY POST	211
THE GREAT POPULAR OVATION ON BROADWAY	211
THE FLYING-BOATS AT SHOAL HARBOUR	224
BALBO HOLDS COUNCIL WITH HIS PILOTS ON BOARD THE <i>Alice</i> AT SHOAL HARBOUR	224
THE <i>Alice</i> AND THE ITALIAN SUBMARINES AT ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND	225
THE RECEPTION AT PONTA DELGADA	246
THE FLYING-BOATS AT PONTA DELGADA	246
AIR-MARSHAL BALBO'S FLYING-BOAT OVER LISBON	247
THOUSANDS OF HANDS STRETCHED OUT IN GREETING TOWARDS VICTORIOUS AVIATORS AS THEY FLY OVER THE LIDO OF ROME	264
THE KING REVIEWS THE CREWS AND INSPECTS THE FLYING-BOATS	264
THE ARRIVAL AT THE LIDO OF ROME, AUGUST 12TH	265
THE ATLANTIC FLYING-BOATS ANCHORED AT THE LIDO OF ROME ON THE EVENING OF THE RETURN	265
THE DUCE WITH BALBO IMMEDIATELY AFTER HE HAD LANDED AT THE LIDO OF ROME	266
AIR-MARSHAL BALBO MEETS MUSSOLINI	266
THE ATLANTIC FLIERS' TRIUMPHAL MARCH THROUGH THE RUINS OF "THE GRANDEUR THAT WAS ROME"	267
THE ATLANTIC FLIERS GO TO THE PALATINE	267
THE DUCE ADDRESSES THE ATLANTIC CREWS AT THE PALATINE ON AUGUST 13TH	272
THE DUCE GIVES BALBO THE TITLE OF AIR-MARSHAL AND PINS TO HIS TUNIC THE MEDAL OF THE ATLANTIC EAGLE	272
THE MARCH OF THE ATLANTIC FLIERS ALONG THE PIAZZA VENEZIA AT ROME ON AUGUST 13TH	273

MY AIR ARMADA

CHAPTER I

THE SELECTION OF AIR BASES FOR THE FLIGHT

FROM the dawn of the aviation era to this very day and for many years to come the ambition of all pilots, novices and experts alike, has been and will be to fly across the Atlantic. It is a fine adventure that appeals to the airman's sporting instincts; but consciously or unconsciously he is actuated also by a loftier motive—that of bridging most effectively the gap between the old and the new worlds. A man's subconsciousness frequently echoes the unexpressed hopes of the masses of his fellow-men.

Every aviator who conquers the ocean has carried further ahead the standard of modern civilisation in its strenuous fight to abolish distance and to link up more closely all the units of the human family from pole to pole. There are now no new lands to be discovered, but the pioneer finds fresh scope for his activities by thoroughly exploring the mysteries of the most wealthy and complex of modern states.

Time was when the more progressive nations of Europe had to deal with the primitive aborigines of the new world; to-day the old continent has a great deal to learn from mechanised American civilisation. But the ebb and flow of the tide of inquisitive humanity from shore to shore of the ocean has brought about a well-proportioned balance; the desire of the Americans to establish fresh contacts with ancient Europe, their

common motherland and the inexhaustible well-spring of inspiration and spiritual ideals, is no less keen than that of Europeans to study the new world.

The fascination of trans-Atlantic flights seems to have gripped the imagination of the Italians to a very marked degree. In the glorious army of ocean fliers Italy holds an honoured rank; from the point of view of mere numbers the Italians who have flown the Atlantic comprise about half of the world's total of the performers of the feat. If you ask an Italian pilot what his greatest ambition is, he will reply: "To fly to America." In addition to the common ties that attract all nations to the new world, the Italian people are drawn to it by bonds of sentiment, affection and gratitude to a land that was discovered by an Italian, that bears the name of another Italian—a land in which hundreds of thousands of Italians live and work and thrive.

The saying that America is a second native-land to the Italians is no mere metaphorical exaggeration. The inhabitants of the valleys of Piedmont and the bold mountaineers of Calabria frequently know more about the configuration of America with its network of great highways stretching like tentacles over the boundless tracts that extend between one city and another, with its inestimable treasures of mineral wealth, with its mysterious mighty forests intersected by majestic rivers, than they do about their own country probably. The family bonds between those who stay at home and their exiled brethren in the new world are so close that in a spiritual sense, the barrier of distance between Italy and America had been broken down even before the aeroplane had reduced the crossing of the Atlantic to a matter of a few hours.

But the aims of Italian aviation during the first ten years of its wonderful revival were concentrated almost exclusively, owing to a series of circumstances, on South America.

When in December, 1928, I went with a number of officials and industrial magnates to the International Congress on Aviation at Washington, and for the first time in my life I had an opportunity of seeing America

from New York to Los Angeles, and from the Canadian frontier to the Gulf of Mexico, the desire to lead an Italian air squadron across the Atlantic began to assume definite shape, and mentally I mapped out the main outlines of my scheme during the long hours of my return crossing on the *Conte Grande*. My actual experience of the great republic of the "Stars and Stripes" had enhanced the great appeal it made to my imagination. More than ever did I now appreciate the important role that America has to play in the general advancement of world civilisation.

This nation which the war had forced to abandon its attitude of strict aloofness, and had united with us in the baptism of the blood of heroes, when all world values seemed to be hurtling into the abyss, had still a glorious mission to carry out. It was the brilliant pioneer of mechanical progress, a mighty fountain of optimism, sanity and power, and the guarantor of more stable peace conditions on the morning after the end of the fearful carnage which had left the old world half-buried in ashes and ruins, convulsed with international squabbles and jealousies, while the future was black with menace.

But I was especially impressed by America's progress in the domain of technics and of aeronautical achievement. She continues to maintain that leadership in aviation which the early flights of the brothers Wright had definitely gained for her in the first years of this century. Aviation was an important factor in America's civilisation, at once the instrument and the inspiration of her dazzling progress and a bold presage of a glorious future. The application of aeroplanes to practical civilian purposes, and the complete technical transformation of her fighting air-force, were already established facts in America, when the first tentative experiments in aviation in Europe were greeted by the masses with hostility or scepticism.

The establishment of a permanent bond, if possible, with America's great band of aviators, who were so full of confidence in their own strength, whose spirit was so magnificent and whose numbers were so imposing, I regarded as a mission worthy of Mussolini's Italy. We had

prolonged and animated chats on this topic on the *Conte Grande*. And then quite suddenly I dropped the idea of solitary flights by individual aeroplanes. Such feats, if successful, would have only a relative importance, because numerous similar experiments had already taken place, and they would not entail the profound social and civil reactions of which I had been dreaming. My theories with regard to aviation *en masse* are too familiar to need repetition here. And the arguments in support of my theories were overwhelmingly applicable to my projected trans-Atlantic flight.

Among other things that inspired my idea of a spectacular aerial flight *en masse* was my recollection of the prestige and the wealth of experience which had accrued to England owing to her naval policy, dating back hundreds of years, of sending fleets of ships over all the seas of the world that English sailors did not know. It was the outcome of the traditional policy of old England of scattering her naval squadrons over all the waters of the globe with instructions to unfurl the proud flag of the country wheresoever the sea provided them with an opening or a landing. I became more and more convinced that Italian aviation would one day be represented not merely by a little knot of brilliant aeronauts who had been lucky enough to carry off spectacular coups, but by hundreds and hundreds of pilots, who, as a matter of course, faced the most inclement and remote skies in the world.

Unfortunately from the point of view of technical equipment, conditions generally were not such in 1929 as to permit the immediate execution of the scheme for which I yearned on board the *Conte Grande*. And so I had to postpone my plan for a flight to the United States, but as it is not in accordance with my principles nor with those of Italian Fascism to lose sight of an ideal destined to redound to the glory of our native land, we decided to start by a flight *en masse* across the South Atlantic ocean which presented fewer difficulties, and for which it was not an impossible feat to secure enough of men and machines in a relatively short space of time.

As a matter of fact this enterprise, which was under-

taken just as an essential preliminary experiment for the greater project of a later date, was a triumphant success. The Italian aeroplanes left Orbetello on December 17th, 1930, flew over the ocean from Bolama to Natal, which they reached on January 6th, 1931, and anchored on the fifteenth day of the same month in the wonderful bay of Rio de Janeiro. Forty-four men in a non-stop flight had travelled by air from the pillars of Hercules across the dark Atlantic. Italy had inscribed a deathless page in the annals of the world's aeronautical progress.

I had scarcely reached Rio de Janeiro when journalists besieged me with questions regarding my openly professed determination not to limit the aims of Italian aviation to the phenomenal success of the flight from Italy to Brazil. And just then, like a lightning flash rending the dark clouds of the future, came the message from the Duce proclaiming the urgency of forging ahead : " In the expectation of the still greater aerial experiment in the tenth year of the Revolution, Italy is proud of you, and is full of admiration for you, brave Atlantic fliers."

Simultaneously with the message of the Duce, the entire programme of my flight across the North Atlantic flashed before my mental vision. His words confirmed me in my determination, and marked out the goal for which I aimed. And now with more certain confidence in the fulfilment of my promise, I was able to broadcast to the Italians in the United States, who were anxious to hear from my own lips the greeting of the fliers, that in a short while, in the tenth year of the Revolution, the Italian air squadron would turn the prows of its silvery planes towards the great republic of the " Stars and Stripes."

The words of the Duce resounded in the square in which all the crews of the Italian flying-boats had gathered on the flowery banks of the Rio de Janeiro where we were hospitably entertained after our arduous task. The cry of " Long live the King ! Long live the Duce ! " which greeted the sublime message of our leader, symbolized our proud confidence in the victory that lay ahead of us.

In the course of the next few days, while we were

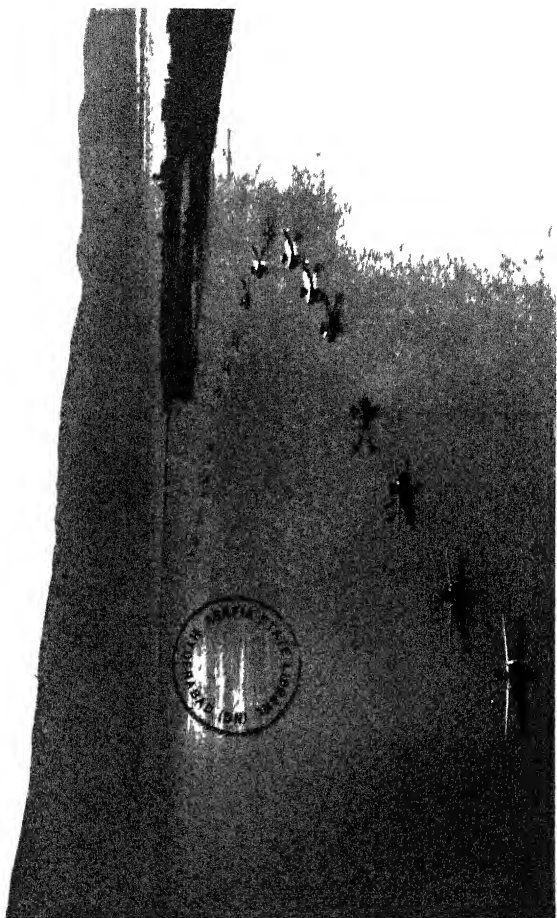
enjoying the hospitality of the metropolis of Brazil, I held long consultations with Maddalena and Longo, my most intimate colleagues, with a view to giving a concrete shape to our dreams. Our investigations extended the scope of our horizons instead of restricting it and strengthened us in our resolution. Suffice it to say that before leaving America Commandant Maddalena had secured elaborate charts of the North Atlantic and had collected an imposing array of data. And once again the steamer which conveyed me back to Italy supplied a congenial atmosphere for prolonged discussions on our project, and for day-dreams about our visit to the wealthy and glorious nation which had for years been the goal of our aspirations.

And now the problem before us was to decide upon one of two routes—that which verges on the extreme limits of the north—the border region of the Arctic Ocean—or that which links the United States with the Azores and the Bermudas.

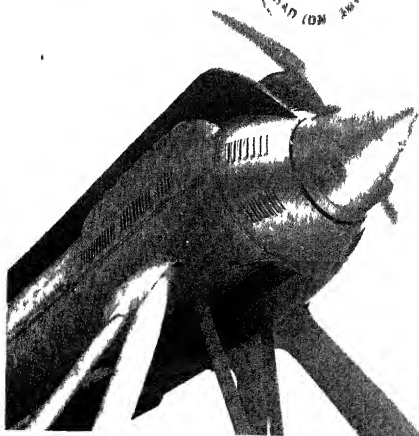
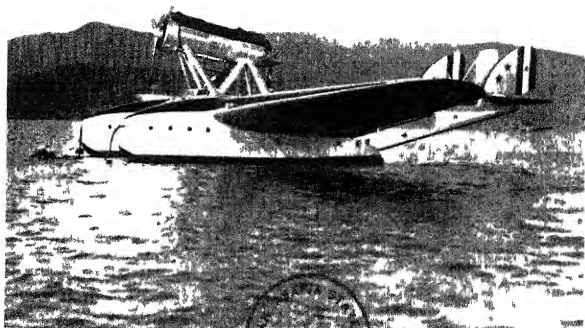
Our problem was destined to await a definite solution for several months. The recollection of our nocturnal departure for Bolama, of the six hours that we spent in the tempestuous murkiness of the Atlantic skies, anxiously waiting for the first gleam of dawn on the horizon, damped our spirits. It struck us that it would be risky to the verge of rashness, if not even absolutely impossible, to encounter, in addition to a nocturnal flight, the relentless hurricanes and persistent fogs of the Arctic Ocean. On the other hand we knew that the Azores offered very slender opportunities for anchorage for a large squadron of flying-boats, and even still greater difficulties for their taking off.

The alternative route on the southerly course seemingly, then, offered no greater likelihood of success ; moreover, it was much longer.

But we were too elated by our recent triumph to put limits to our own aspirations. Far from quailing before the thought of our ambitious scheme, we yielded to the temptation to enlarge its scope. When we stepped ashore amidst the cheering crowds of our fellow-countrymen the plan of our cruise was already mapped out on paper, and



AL OKBJ ILIIO



THIS 55 AT ORBIT IIIO
A REAR VIEW OF A FLYING BOAT'S ENGINE DURING FLIGHT SHOWING
THE RADIATOR

it embraced nothing less than a voyage around the earth, via the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, India, China, Japan, the Kurile Islands, Kamchatka, the Aleutian Islands, Alaska, California, Panama, Florida, New York, Newfoundland, Ireland and Italy.

Full of self-confidence, we wasted no time, but devoted ourselves right away to the preparations for our great crusade.

Unfortunately an unforeseen disaster interrupted us in our task. Colonel Umberto Maddalena, who had trained at Orbetello with a zeal that was only matched by his skill, the airmen who flew the South Atlantic, and who side by side with me led our air armada from Italy to Brazil, met with a tragic death in the Tyrrhenian Sea just on the very day when the men who were to undertake our coming world flight were summoned to Orbetello to be trained by him. Maddalena was a true man of the sea.

On the sea he had spent a considerable portion of his early youth, following the irresistible lure of the waves; he had been cabin-boy, sailor and officer on vessels which carried on the traditions of the old-time Italian navigators, and had taken part in many voyages to the most distant quarters of the globe. As a sailor he was a master of his craft, and he had an almost uncanny skill as a steersman. He could cope alike with the sudden hurricanes which lash the Atlantic to frenzy and with the protracted spells of calm that lull it into a sort of cataleptic trance; the laws of the winds which sway the limitless stretches of the ocean were all known to him. His long lean face, his slightly dreamy eyes, the rhythmic roll of his long thin legs, his somewhat stooping shoulders, his very words and gestures—everything about him had the stamp of the sailor. Inclined to be shy and retiring on land, he was full of self-confidence on sea; his expression assumed a certain metallic hardness and his voice rang out with a robust timbre as he stepped on deck. He was quite a different man, spontaneous, alert, commanding. When he obeyed the call of aviation he preferred to serve on a flying-boat; the broad horizon of the sea appealed to him.

The flight from Italy to Brazil had proven his excellence as pilot, organiser and commander. As a preliminary step towards our coming flight round the world, which we intended carrying out with one stop between Europe and North America, he was making preparations in company with Ceceoni for the establishment of a fresh record by flying in a straight line from Rome to Cuba. In fact it was on the very machine which was to carry him to Cuba that he met his doom. The mystery that enveloped the tragedy was not completely cleared up at the time, and even to-day we are in the dark as to what actually occurred. All the theories put forward are inconsistent with the marvellous ability of those in control of the craft and with the technical perfection of the craft itself. Certain theories advanced as to the cause of the disaster seem plausible enough when examined from one angle, while from another angle they are obviously absurd.

But there is a still more mysterious feature about the death of Maddalena ; while the remains of his companions were found sooner or later, not only has the sea never given back the heroic body of Umberto Maddalena, it has not even restored to his friends the most trivial relic belonging to him. He fell from the sky at noon that bright spring day, and the sea swallowed him up within just a few yards of the shore. The sea guards him in its bosom for all eternity—a fate meet for a demigod !

Legends galore about his strange disappearance are circulated among the pilots who fly across the seas, and are the theme of daydreams and fairy-tales among the Italian children whom he loved so well. Some day a poet worthy of the task will write an epic about him. We, his companions and brethren, have realised that he had fulfilled his destiny, and we also think that there was a tinge of the miraculous in the wonderful record of a heroic life which started on the sea and ended in the sea. We invoke his gentle shade whenever a flying-boat floating the tricolour rises over the ocean.

When Colonel (now General) Tedeschini, who was then my adjutant, came to tell me of the unforeseen disaster, I felt as though a thunderbolt had paralysed my brain and my heart seemed to stop beating. I was in a restaurant

in Rome at the time. Without uttering a word I flew to the Lido of Pisa where the tragedy had occurred a few hours previously. Among the acrid grass along the shore, beneath the dark shadows of the aged pines, in the solemn silence of that desolate land, against which the waves of the sea broke with rhythmic sobbing, we found practically all the battered wreckage of the ill-fated machine. But there was not the faintest trace of him to be found. My bitter despair on that desolate night when I hoped in vain that the sea might restore to us the remains of our dead comrade still wrings my heart.

And now we had to carry out without his aid a task which he alone had seemed destined to fulfil. The school of Aerial Navigation at Orbetello had been left without a commandant. Lieutenant-Colonel Longo was at Madrid completing the year for which he had been appointed as Air Attaché. I was anxious to secure a successor to Maddalena.

It seemed to me that the man most fitted for the job was General Aldo Pellegrini, who had been for four years my adjutant, and who had previously a brilliant career as a naval officer and a hydroplane officer. After hesitating whether he should accept the command of an aerial squadron—a post with a status akin to that of a general in charge of an army corps, or whether he should prefer the command of the reorganised school of aviation at Orbetello, General Pellegrini, in view of the imminent world flight, suddenly decided upon the more dangerous alternative—he accepted Orbetello.

In selecting the crew for the school at Orbetello I adopted a novel method. While for the previous voyages only hydroplane crews had been chosen, I thought that it would be necessary on this occasion to extend the scope of my selection to all types of aeronauts. The decision regarding the new trans-Atlantic crews, that they were to consist of volunteers to a man, brought many utterly unknown pilots as candidates.

However, I was not keen on spectacular names—I wanted reliable men. Therefore, while I saw to it that a certain percentage of veteran fliers should be included, I expressed the definite wish that men drawn from the

rank and file of the Italian Air Force should take part in the imminent adventure. As had always been the case, it was quite sufficient to make my appeal to have applications pouring in from all sides. There was not an airman who satisfied the conditions laid down that did not earnestly beg to be summoned to Orbetello. The outcome to the very careful selection that was made was that four-fifths of the seventy men selected came from the aerodromes.

It is unnecessary to point out that the training of these men was a rather complicated affair. It was essential first of all to accustom pilots to the sea who had been used to landing on the ground, and who had served in different departments of the Italian Air Force—some of them on chaser planes, others on scouting planes, and others on bombing planes. It was no trivial task to give detailed naval training to men accustomed to fly over plains or mountains, and to make them thoroughly intimate with conditions on the water and over the water.

For months and months the novices were ordered to handle oars and sails, to manage small and medium-sized boats, and to get abundance of practice in every phase of naval routine. Their faces were tanned by sea and scorching sun. There was no dangerous or toilsome task that they did not face with gay enthusiasm. On the return of Colonel Longo, an old and seasoned sailor, the training became even more intensive. After a few months nobody could distinguish former hydroplane pilots from former aeroplane pilots among the pupils at Orbetello.

Meanwhile I devoted all my energies towards securing a thorough knowledge of the itinerary of our expedition. Many regions over which the Italian air squadron was to fly had never been explored by aeronauts; regarding others the information available was exceedingly meagre, while the knowledge we possessed about considerable tracts was second-hand. So great was the scope of the voyage we had planned that in order to examine thoroughly our probable bases *en route*, time was needed; and to get at them by the usual means would take months and months.

Among the pilots of the previous crossing the most

unlucky were the heroic Recagno and Abbriata, who on the tragic night at Bolama, after they had been left with their damaged craft, had, immediately after we had taken off, performed wonders in their efforts to rescue their lost comrade, and had concealed from us all the facts of their unavailing heroism and their noble self-sacrifice. They also concealed from us the cause of the disaster. It was only later on that I chanced to learn in an indirect fashion how they each deserved both praise and reward for their action on that occasion. It would have been impossible, however, for me to guess this from their laconic two-line report.

It just occurred to me now that no more fitting recompense could be made to those two heroic men than the mission of trust which I assigned to them at the very beginning of our preparations for our impending expedition. On May 1st, 1931, Captain Recagno was sent to the Aleutian Islands in the Far East in order to explore the ground and make preliminary arrangements for our landing. It was neither a short nor an easy journey, and it was not concluded until November.

The accurate and detailed report which he had begun to send me regularly from that region, and which he completed verbally on his return, ended on a very optimistic note. He had not only explored the Aleutian Islands, but also Kamchatka. He had adopted for his investigations all the means at his disposal—Chinese junks, Japanese steamers, Russian trains, sailing ships and fishing smacks. He was familiar now with the physical configuration of the countries that he had visited, and he knew the coastlines, the shallows and the reefs of those remote seas, as well as the freakish meteorological vagaries of the skies that brooded over them. In his opinion the aerial itinerary of the Italian fleet would not be merely possible, but relatively easy. He marked out the island of Atu among the Aleutian Islands as a base suitable for an aerial squadron.

Unfortunately, almost simultaneously with the return of our explorer from the Far East, the situation between China and Japan, which during his stay in those countries was menacing, suddenly developed into open warfare.

And what a war ! The most irregular and indefinite type of a war imaginable. A war which opened without any definite declaration of hostilities, a war fought by Japan with its wonted systematic doggedness, and by China with roving bands picked up higgledy-piggledy—bands accustomed to brigandage, seething with anarchical propaganda, bereft of responsible leadership, and quite prepared to pass from one camp to another as the whim seized them.

Under these conditions there were very slender grounds for hoping that the trouble would soon come to an end ; on the other hand, it was absolutely certain that the appearance of a large Italian air armada of bombing planes, even though it carried no ammunition and was engaged on an absolutely peaceful mission, would eventually arouse suspicion and ill-feeling in both belligerent camps and would most decidedly not secure for us the assistance which would be sorely needed by us.

In addition to the political obstacle to our enterprise, there were financial difficulties. The economic depression which had already been crippling the whole world for several months after the close of 1931 was becoming more and more acute ; in fact this year marked the climax of the crisis. And Italy did not escape the terrible effects of the world depression. An aerial expedition of such proportions over such remote regions, an expedition including in its itinerary Tokio and New York, situated in opposite parts of the world, would not have cost less than 20,000,000 lira. This was far too formidable a demand to make on our budget at such a period of depression. We had to waive the idea.

Without brooding unduly over our shipwrecked scheme I immediately planned a second itinerary. I only retained one feature of my abandoned plan—the flight over the North Atlantic. This we did not wish to give up—in fact we could not give it up. This was the very psychological moment when the noble idea of linking more closely the United States and Europe through the medium of aviation was gripping the imagination of the entire world. There was a rivalry among the various nations which was exacting a fresh toll of heroic lives—a rivalry

which, however, held forth the promise of a final spectacular triumph.

Following the successful venture of Post and Gatty, the German aviator, von Gronau, flew from Iceland to Labrador, stopping *en route* in Greenland. His flight proved that the icy North Atlantic could be conquered with relative ease despite the eternal inclemency of atmospheric conditions. I was especially interested in the possibility of establishing secure bases in regions which were popularly regarded as inaccessible to navigators. The period between June and August seemed to be a comparatively safe one from the meteorological point of view. In order not to retrench too much the itinerary of our impending expedition, I decided from the very outset to fly the return journey also. Our squadron would consequently be able to complete the double flight of the North Atlantic, a dramatic record in the annals of world aviation.

Just at that time a happy coincidence favoured the success of my project. This was the impending Chicago International Exhibition, which the Americans meant to make a spectacular event that would rivet the attention and attract the patronage of the whole world. Its motto, "A Century of Progress," gave the gist of the scope of its programme. It aimed at giving demonstrations of the triumphs in invention achieved by the whole world, and especially by America, during the last hundred years. Mechanised civilisation, the proud boast of our time, was to celebrate its centenary in June and July, 1933.

Italy, like the other nations, would not dally about taking part in the celebration. If at the psychological moment a squadron of, say, twenty Italian flying-boats could arrive on Lake Michigan, and fly over the great city on its banks, the triumph of the aeroplane, man's most recent conquest, which had been started by America and brought to a victorious consummation by Italy, would have assumed the nature of an apotheosis. I knew what an intense interest the Americans took in aviation problems. I felt certain that our flight would be regarded in the light of a magnificent contribution to Chicago's exhibition, and finally I had no doubt that our

enterprise, which was rich in chivalrous and romantic associations, in view of the inevitable risks and the strain on human nerves which its accomplishment entailed, would be hailed by the Americans as the most tangible proof of the spirit of solidarity linking the old world to the new, linking ancient Italy and the young republic.

Consequently the interests of civilisation blended with sentimental motives which form the main stimulus to progress, and Italian interests in particular, impelled us to act without delay. The Italian Air Force had already rendered incalculable services for the triumph of peace and of successful agreements among the nations. But the expedition that was to commemorate the tenth year of the revolution would have a moral effect far surpassing any previous record.

And now there remained for us the task of getting a precise knowledge of our route. It would not do to jeopardise the prestige of our country, apart from endangering the lives of our crews; we had to take every possible precaution against such eventualities. Second-hand information would not suffice. A thorough, detailed investigation of the route we had to travel was imperative. Although I already knew my bearings as far as the North Atlantic was concerned, I resolved to send Recagno again in the role of advance guard. He left in April, 1932, for Greenland. On the same day his old companion of Bolama, Abbriata, was sent to Labrador.

These two officers carried out their task to perfection—a task by no means simple or easy. The circumstantial details which they obtained about our projected route were invaluable to us. Captain Recagno had travelled towards the western coast of Greenland, which is more suitable for a possible air-base owing to the configuration of its seaboard, which provides a relatively safe bay. Recagno had been obliged to go from Godthaab to Julianaheeb in a motor-boat, which was piloted by Esquimaux amid mountainous icebergs and through a maze of countless bays ringed round by icy peaks, and with large islands and dangerous little crags blocking their entrances. An intensive study of meteorological conditions and a minute examination of the coastline convinced

Captain Recagno that the lake behind the little town of Julianahab was a possible base for landing in Greenland. It is a long narrow lake shaped like a kidney-bean, buried in between the slopes of colossal mountains, and it presents tremendous risks for a landing, which would need to be carried out very cautiously, one plane at a time.

The information which Recagno supplied us, and which was borne out by the facts stated by von Gronau regarding his second voyage, induced us to accept his suggestion when he returned to Italy at the end of July.

Meanwhile Captain Abbriata was making investigations for us in Labrador. When he reached St. John's in Newfoundland he found himself in difficulties about getting to Labrador. He had the good luck to meet with an American airman who owned a little Moth and who generously offered to fly with him to Cartwright.

The air trip was carried out without a hitch, and Abbriata landed and remained as long as was necessary in this little centre, which he decided was a suitable anchorage for the Italian squadron in the course of its itinerary. Unfortunately the poor American aviator perished on his return journey. Perhaps he lost his way and was carried out on the ocean, or maybe he went astray on the desolate coast over which, for so many months of the year, an impenetrable blanket of mist hangs. At any rate nothing further was heard of our noble friend, whom we shall always remember as a glorious victim in the cause of aviation and of human solidarity.

Abbriata remained for three weeks at Cartwright making important meteorological observations regarding the entire region, and collecting details about the section of the coastline which was to shelter the Italian squadron. The region in which he dwelt during his stay at Labrador was actually the very one which we had already marked out in the chart of our ocean flight, and strengthened us in our decision to select the North Atlantic as the safest aerial route in summer-time between Europe and America.

Abbriata returned to Italy towards the end of July simultaneously with Recagno. The findings of the two explorers were confirmed at the Convention of Atlantic Aviators, which meanwhile had been arranged at Rome,

and at which the discussions had been very animated. The world fliers proved to be very shrewd, logical and forceful disputants. The aim of this convention, in which about fifty aviators took part, was to pool their common experiences to elucidate the important problem of inter-continental aerial routes. The notes submitted, the theories that were advanced with acumen and fervour, the statistics and data supplied and carefully sifted, constitute a valuable mass of information which will prove of priceless value in years to come, when a regular air service will be eventually established between Europe and America. The Italian Air Ministry has arranged for the publication in book form in several languages, for the benefit of the whole world, of the discussions and findings of the convention at Rome.

Apart from the value of the findings arrived at in the discussions at the Atlantic Convention in Rome, it bound together in one great family old-time and juvenile pilots. An atmosphere of cordial friendship prevailed during those days among individuals of such widely divergent character and antecedents, and who hailed from countries so far apart. It seemed as though the cause of aviation had abolished all barriers of race and tongue. No modern mechanical invention is more efficacious than the flying-machine for eliminating the effects of material and spiritual distances between nation and nation.

Meanwhile I was doing my very utmost to make all arrangements in advance for our European bases. How many stops would the Italian squadron have to make before reaching its point of departure for its Atlantic flight? There was no doubt that we ought to take off from Iceland as von Gronau had done. But so far we had not sufficiently adequate information about the configuration of this country to arrange in advance for the anchorage of twenty-four flying-boats. I may emphasize at this point that a mass flight presents difficulties of quite a different kind from those which an isolated plane has to face. Furthermore it is a much more difficult matter to arrange bases for hydroplanes than for aeroplanes. Great organising ability and ample time at his disposal are needed by the man entrusted with the task.

In May, 1932, Major Stefano Cagna set out to investigate personally the provisional route through Europe for the expedition. Major Cagna was an ideal man for the job, as not only had he an extensive and varied knowledge of the sea, a knowledge dating back to his early days as a naval officer, and a practical experience with flying boats, but he had also taken part in all the Italian aerial expeditions so far. I felt confident that his specialised information, especially with regard to the northern bases, would be an invaluable asset to him in making first-hand investigations on those icy seas over which he had travelled with the unforgettable Maddalena when they went to the rescue of the crew of the *Italia* who were shipwrecked on an iceberg.

Furthermore, he had always been my adjutant, the inseparable companion in all my enterprises—in short, the man I trusted most. And on this occasion, as always, he carried out his task to perfection. He made a non-stop flight from Orbetello to Amsterdam. The next day he was at Londonderry in Ireland, and forty-eight hours afterwards he had reached Reykjavik in Iceland.

An added interest was lent to his lightning scouting expedition by the fact that he undertook it in the brand new Atlantic flying-boat S 55, which was a masterpiece of craftsmanship, specially designed by Marchetti for the coming Atlantic flight. The S 55, which gave perfect satisfaction on its maiden trip, was equipped with two Fiat 24 motors of a newer pattern, and more powerful than those which had been used in the South Atlantic flight. The fact that the trial trip of the new craft was carried out from start to finish under decidedly adverse weather conditions, proved how well grounded was our optimism.

The S 55 encountered a dreadful hurricane in the North Sea and in the Atlantic, and Cagna had to battle against mist and rain-storms on the difficult stretch from Londonderry to Reykjavik. Cagna found that the Iceland base about which we had been extremely uneasy, was splendidly suited for an anchorage for our squadron before "taking off" for its ocean flight. He received a most enthusiastic ovation from the people of Iceland.

I found Major Cagna with his little crew, comprising Captain Questa, Lieutenant Capannini and a wireless operator, on Lake Geneva where he had anchored, waiting for my return from the International Conference on Disarmament, to which I had been summoned by the Italian Government at the end of July. I carefully scrutinised the favourable reports about the bases at Londonderry and Reykjavik, and I congratulated the gallant leader of the successful expedition. I was indeed extremely delighted that my late misgivings regarding the European halting-places for our coming flight had been completely dispelled. As for the new flying-boat it had an opportunity of giving a fresh proof of its air-worthiness during the course of the next few days. It so happened that I wanted to send an urgent personal message to the Duce. I asked Cagna to fly as quickly as possible from Geneva and back again. He did the double journey in less than a day, and brought back a written reply to my note from the Duce. I may add that when he started for Rome the Alps were cloud-capped and the meteorological authorities stated that it was dangerous to cross those formidable peaks under prevailing conditions.

Von Gronau was an aviator who had a unique and detailed knowledge of the North Atlantic stretches. I took to him immediately when I met him at the Convention of Atlantic Fliers at Rome. I was aware at the time that he was preparing for his flight round the world. I arranged to pay him a personal visit during the course of the summer. Accordingly, on my way home from the annual air pageant at Hendon, I went to Warnemunde, where he was staying. Warnemunde is a little naval station on the eastern coast of the Bay of Lubeca, a short distance from Rostock. It is the seat of a German School of Civil Aviation. The German pilots welcomed us with the greatest cordiality, while von Gronau treated me as a brother. The daring world flier was busily engaged at this time making preparations for his imminent voyage, which was destined to turn out such a magnificent triumph.

With the chivalry which is typical of all those who

fly over the vast spaces of the ocean, and who know what it is to risk one's life for a great ideal, von Gronau gave me intimate details of his observations during the course of his flights in Iceland, Greenland, Labrador and the other northern regions of America. His speech is clear cut and precise as one would expect from a man of action. But the terse, hard compactness of his language when dealing with a technical topic, is relieved by the genial and kindly twinkle of clear, bright eyes glowing in a face like that of a big boy. He agreed with me that the most serious difficulties I would have to face would be climatic ones.

The most dreaded enemy, he said, was fog, which bore down on the aviator quite suddenly, and frequently enveloped him for hundreds and hundreds of miles. He added that in June the ice-fields usually broke up, scattering adrift gigantic icebergs against which even the biggest steamers could not fight. Apart from these inconveniences, he did not foresee any insuperable difficulties in our path, and felt quite sanguine of the success of the Italian squadron.

As, in von Gronau's opinion, an efficient meteorological service was absolutely indispensable, and as he was loud in his praises of Professor Baumann, an expert in this branch of science, who happened to be visiting Warnemunde that very day, I decided to request the German Government to permit him to accompany us on our ocean trip. Professor Baumann himself was delighted at the suggestion. I found him to be a most charming fellow, apart altogether from his profound knowledge of the erratic climatic conditions of the North Atlantic regions. A little later I received a most courteous reply from the German Government, permitting me to avail myself of the services of Professor Baumann.

CHAPTER II

THE AIR ARMADA'S FLYING-BOATS

AND so summer comes to an end with our preparations well under way. Only one thing now remains to be settled—the Duce's decision regarding details of our expedition and the date of our departure. Then one day quite unexpectedly, shortly before the commencement on October 28th of the tenth year of the Revolution, which is to be celebrated with great solemnity in Italy to commemorate the fine work already done, and to inspire zeal for the task of reconstruction in the coming years, the Duce sends for me. He is just preparing the calendar of the fixtures for the year Ten as I am ushered into his presence. In the grand review of the colossal tasks achieved since the Revolution, a place of honour must be found for the Air Force, which the Duce found disorganised in October, 1922, and which by his own personal zeal he remodelled, strengthened and placed in the vanguard of the world's aerial armaments in the course of ten years.

"Well, what about your preparations for your flight?" he asks in a quiet, almost listless tone.

"We are ready," I reply with a candid consciousness that I am stating a fact.

"What about the men? And what about the flying-boats?"

"Both men and planes are ready. In spring the planes and the motors will be delivered to us without fail. As for the crews, they have been at Orbetello for a year and half."

"Then can we decide upon the end of spring and the beginning of summer 1933?"

"Certainly."

"Very good. Well, let me have a detailed plan of the expedition."

A few days later I call on the Duce with my plan. I remind him that in June, 1933, the monument to Christopher Columbus will be unveiled at Chicago. I add that Chicago has never been a direct goal of the great Atlantic flights, and that to make it our destination on such a unique occasion would be a gesture that would appeal to American sentiment in a very striking manner. I next recall to his mind the cordial greetings that were received in 1929, the demonstrations of friendship and the great popular banquets at which thousands of Italians were seated.

The impressive grandeur of the great industrial city arises before my mental vision, as I speak to the Duce. I tell him that I am fully convinced that if an Italian air squadron reaches Chicago during the summer period of the International Exhibition it will arouse the greatest enthusiasm. I add that I would like to see from our flying-boats Chicago decked with festoons and bunting and agog with festive excitement on the shores of its gigantic lake. . . . At present I am counting on taking twenty machines with me ; but I might even manage twenty-four.

At this point I explain to the Duce all the details of our preparations. I have forgotten nothing. We have foreseen the most trivial contingencies, and have made most careful arrangements to meet them in advance.

The Duce has no hesitation about approving of my plan, and a few days later makes for the first time his announcement in the calendar of the impending voyage from Rome to Chicago and home again via New York, and assigns the date as the end of May and the first fortnight of June.

Henceforth there are no longer any doubts on the matter. After the announcement by the Duce, the expedition is no longer a mere probability, it is an actuality which is beginning to take concrete form. In the New Year I pay even more frequent visits to Orbetello, where I always find everybody keyed to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

Atlantic trip. It belonged originally to the Prince of Monaco, who used it for crossing the Mediterranean, and later on it had been an auxiliary vessel for the air route between Rome and Egypt. In the previous Atlantic flight the *Alice* had been hired by the Air Ministry, but later on they decided to buy it. Eventually the owners clinched the bargain with 300,000 lira thrown in, in exchange for an aeroplane. A significant commentary on the depreciation of the value of ships! The *Alice* is a thousand ton vessel, and had no difficulty in coping with the Atlantic. In fact, the Air Minister decided to use it for carrying supplies and for service on the North American coast. It was arranged that it would await our arrival at Cartwright, where it was to serve as a floating inn for the crews of the squadron, which would have great difficulty in securing accommodation at Labrador.

Longo's brother, a gallant sea captain, bound to me both by family ties and congeniality of character, was given command of the *Alice*; he was also granted the rank of an officer of the Air Force. In forming his crew Captain Longo gave preference to the Santo Stefano sailors who had been for many years in contact with the aviators of Orbetello. This meant that there would be a family atmosphere aboard the *Alice*, and the aviators, after having completed their tough fight with the Atlantic, would feel at home.

At Porto Santo Stefano the *Alice* carried out some radiogoniometrical experiments. She cruised around the Tuscan Archipelago, keeping in touch with the crews of the flying-boats. Among other services which she rendered to the expedition was a test to ascertain the reactions of our quondam "land" aviators to sea-sickness. All the pupils of the Orbetello school in turn were taken for a trip aboard her. It was in the month of February, when the Tyrrhenian Sea is at its worst, and the *Alice* had to contend with mountainous waves. It was a rather trying experience for some of our novices.

The *Alice* sailed for America on March 20th. In addition to all the provisions and equipment needed for

the American bases of the expedition, she carried aboard Adone Nosari, the doyen of aeronautical journalists. Although only a few grey hairs now adorn his typically ancient Roman head, Adone has all the romantic enthusiasm of early youth. Under the mask of a brilliant chronicler of facts is concealed the soul of a lion-hunter. The trip on the *Alice* appealed to the adventurous spirit of this veteran journalist, and as I noticed the blitheness with which he stepped aboard the vessel, it struck me that there is latent in every Italian a streak of the pioneer instinct of Christopher Columbus.

Two of the five journalists who accompanied all my previous expeditions—Nosari, Massai, Quilici, Quadrone and Intaglietta—dropped out of the running rather unexpectedly. Quadrone had got malaria while on a trip to interview the last surviving slave-traders in equatorial Africa, and Intaglietta had recently been appointed director of a big Italian newspaper in Buenos Ayres. Their places were taken by Paolo Monelli and Mario Bassi. In addition to these, there was Luigi Freddi, representing the *Popolo d'Italia*, my old mate of bygone aerial battles, my gallant and trusted comrade in many a perilous enterprise. But with the exception of Adone they all sailed on the big ocean liners. Poor old Adone! It was a disappointment to him not to have witnesses of his gallant battle with the ocean aboard the *Alice*!

I have already stated the system I adopted this year in enrolling crews for my Atlantic flight. A percentage of the men who had taken part in the South Atlantic flight still stayed with us, but the bulk of the crews consisted of fresh recruits, very young ones at that, and for the most part, "land aviators." The large number of flying-boats available permitted the subdivision of the squadron into two flights, each of which comprised twelve machines. Each flight was divided into four platoons. To distinguish the various formations, black, white, red and green colours were chosen. Each colour was subdivided into stars and discs. Furthermore, every machine has its name, derived from the name of the first pilot.

The alignment of the squadron through all the stages of the flight was as follows :

1st	Platoon—	Black	stars.
2nd	„	„	discs.
3rd	„	Red	stars.
4th	„	„	discs.
5th	„	White	stars.
6th	„	„	discs.
7th	„	Green	stars.
8th	„	„	discs.

Subjoined are the distinguishing marks of each machine with its radio-telegraphic name and the personnel of its crew :

FIRST FLIGHT

FIRST PLATOON—(*Black Stars*)

The “ I-BALB ”

General Balbo, Lieutenant-Colonel Cagna, Engineer-Lieutenant Capannini, Wireless Operator Sergeant Berti, Engineer-Major Pezzani.

The “ I-QUES ”

Captain Questa, Lieutenant Marrama, First Air Engineer Antonante, Wireless Operator First Airman Zoppi.

The “ I-BISE ”

Captain Biseo, Captain Cupini, Engineer-Sergeant Parizzi, Wireless Operator Sergeant-Major Giulini.

SECOND PLATOON—(*Black Discs*)

The “ I-PELL ”

General Pellegrini, Captain Bonini, Engineer-Sergeant Alberi, Wireless Operator Sergeant-Major Pifferi.

The " I-MIGL "

Captain Miglia, Lieutenant Fisicaro, Engineer Sergeant-Major Lettini, Wireless Operator Second Airman Cubeddu.

The " I-BORG "

Captain Borghetti, Captain Fraili, Engineer First Airman Leone, Wireless Operator First Airman Balestri.

THIRD PLATOON—(*Red Stars*)

The " I-NANN "

Captain Nannini, Captain Accardo, Engineer First Airman Filliponi, Wireless Operator Sergeant-Major Vaschetto.

The " I-LIPP "

Captain Lippi, Captain Ceccotti, Engineer First Airman Mastronardo, Wireless Operator First Airman Bisol.

The " I-ROVI "

Captain Rovis, Lieutenant Aini, Engineer Sergeant Cippollini, Wireless Operator First Airman Martinelli.

FOURTH PLATOON—(*Red Discs*)

The " I-DINI "

Captain Baldini, Lieutenant Novelli, Engineer Sergeant Quintavalle, Wireless Operator Sergeant Joria.

The " I-LEON "

Captain Leone, Lieutenant Revetria, Engineer First Airman Fabbri, Wireless Operator Sergeant D'Amora.

The " I-TEUC "

Captain Teucci, Captain Marino, Engineer First Airman Romeo, Wireless Operator First Airman Gasperini.

MY AIR ARMADA

SECOND FLIGHT

FIFTH PLATOON—(*White Stars*)

The " I-GIOR "

Captain Giordano, Captain Fiori, Engineer First Airman Negro, Wireless Operator Sergeant-Major Viotti.

The " I-NAPO "

Captain Napoli, Lieutenant Sarlo, Engineer Sergeant De Donno, Wireless Operator Sergeant Virgilio.

The " I-VERC "

Captain Vercelloni, Captain Frabetti, Engineer First Airman Mansani, Wireless Operator First Airman Murolo.

SIXTH PLATOON—(*White Discs*)

The " I-RECA "

Captain Reccagno, Captain Cadrigheri, Engineer First Airman Muzi, Wireless Operator First Airman Chiaramonti.

The " I-GALL "

Captain Gallo, Captain Clingheri, Engineer Sergeant Bartolini, Wireless Operator First Airman Pelosi.

The " I-ABBR "

Captain Abbriata, Lieutenant Nicoletti, Engineer First Airman D' Amuri, Wireless Operator Sergeant Arcangeli.

SEVENTH PLATOON—(*Green Stars*)

The " I-BIAN "

Captain Biani, Marshal Moretti, Engineer First Airman Manara, Wireless Operator Sergeant Suriani.

The " I-RANI "

Captain Ranieri, Lieutenant Squaglia, Engineer Sergeant-Major Cremaschi, Wireless Operator Sergeant Boveri.

The " I-ARAM "

Captain Aramu, Lieutenant Orsolan, Engineer Sergeant Bonaccini, Wireless Operator First Airman Frusciante.

EIGHTH PLATOON—(*Green Discs*)

The " I-LONG "

Lieutenant-Colonel Longo, Captain De Vittembeschi, Engineer Sergeant-Major Ometto, Wireless Operator Sergeant-Major Bernazzani.

The " I-CANN "

Captain Cannistracci, Captain Rossi, Engineer Sergeant-Major Tiraboschi, Wireless Operator Sergeant Simonetti.

The " I-CALO "

Captain Calo, Lieutenant Palmiotti, Engineer First Airman Pinelli, Wireless Operator Sergeant Mascioli.

This year the help we asked from the Royal Navy was limited to two submarines and two drifters. They were already on their way towards the American coast. The two submarines and the drifters were under the command of Commandant Della Campana, who accompanied us on our previous Atlantic flight.

An efficient meteorological service was of the utmost importance to us, and could be carried out best by the little vessels that usually devote the summer months to fishing in the North Atlantic. These cockle-shells do not strike the casual observer as being capable of holding out

against the fierce hurricanes of those seas, but, actually, despite their frail and insignificant appearance they can withstand the wildest weather for weeks on end on the ocean. Consequently, we did not hesitate to embark on them our wireless operators and the officials who were to give us meteorological reports. It would not have been difficult to find such vessels in Italy, as there are plenty of them in Trieste, in Viareggio and Civitavecchia. But the sending of such craft all the way to the North Atlantic would be too protracted and expensive a job. We decided that it would be better to send Major Marini to England to hire vessels that were actually on the spot, in the vicinity of our ocean bases. He found the required number quite easily, and hired them for us straightaway—a deal which was satisfactory alike to us and our English friends.

The first Atlantic flying-boats commenced to arrive at Orbetello from Sesto Calende in April, under the pilotage of the same officers who were afterwards to fetch them across the Atlantic. The S.I.A.I. sent a few of them from day to day. Towards the end of the second half of May they were all at Orbetello.

I shall not trouble to go into the details of the S 55, whose fame has assumed legendary dimensions throughout the world. The beautiful craft was overhauled and reinforced for our flight. It was unbeatable for strength, endurance and speed. In the words of the gifted builder, Signor Alessandro Marchetti, it was like an Olympian athlete.

The S 55 had a chequered history. Constructed by Marchetti, in 1922, and entered for the competition organised by the Air Ministry for a flying-boat capable of launching torpedoes on the high seas, it was summarily rejected by the Examining Board. It was the victim of the prejudice of a hoary conservative outlook that shrank appalled from any bold innovations in craftsmanship. But when I was appointed as Under-Secretary at the Air Ministry I revoked the death sentence on the S 55. Since that date the machine did fifteen Atlantic flights, the most famous which was the one from Italy to Brazil.

The X° type which we used on the North Atlantic flight was equipped with "Isotta Fraschini" 1500 horsepower engines, and was capable of a speed of 180 miles an hour with an average rate of 140 miles an hour. With a cargo of one ton it could do a journey of over 2500 miles on an average consumption of three and a half pounds of spirit per mile.

Eighty-eight different types of screws were tested during our two years of preparation. We preferred metal screws and tested foreign makes such as those of Hedderheimer, Junker and Ratier. In all 250 experimental flights were made in order to gauge the relative merits of the various screws. We finally decided upon the S.I.A.I. three-bladed screw, which, in addition to a maximum of speed on a minimum of consumption of spirit, showed the best lifting power for taking off.

Fully eighteen makes of radiators were put to the test, before we selected one of circular shape with rectangular vent-pipes to be fixed at the rear of the engine. It was also Italian—a S.I.A.I. type. We remembered that almost all our troubles during the previous flight were attributed to the radiators. The make we adopted for our imminent ocean flight was quite as efficient for cooling purposes as the older types, but was lighter and was less affected by vibration.

Instead of the octagonal tanks which we used in the South Atlantic flight, we adopted oval and cylindrical ones which had the advantage of greater capacity and strength. They were tested on the testing-bench for a continuous period of fifty hours, and static and dynamic experiments were made under a vertical pressure of 100 feet of water.

The compass, the speed computer, the descent and climb indicator and the drift gauge were all combined in an illuminated dash in accordance with "Nistri-Bisco" method.

We adopted the artificial horizon of the gyroscopic Sperry pattern to gauge the longitudinal and latitudinal axes of the flying-boat and a Sperry course and distance calculator.

In the beginning of May, when I was laying for the

seventh time the Air Force estimates before my comrades in Parliament, I expressed the hope that in a short time I would help to give Mussolini's Italy the joy of a new triumph. The Chamber paid me a very generous tribute and expressed to the Duce its heartfelt gratitude for the great achievement of the reorganisation of the Italian Air Force.

The generous applause with which they greeted me was a good omen for the success of the hundred men of the Italian Air Armada who were destined to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

CHAPTER III

MUSSOLINI AND THE KING OF ITALY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF THE FLIGHT

A FEW days later the Duce, during the course of one of my bi-weekly reports to him, discussed the details of our expedition. He had received direct from the King and from De Bono information which rather worried him, he said. The season was well advanced, and the risk of foggy conditions was very serious.

I laid the documents dealing with the plan of my itinerary before the Duce, and he was thoroughly satisfied that I had organised everything perfectly. I assured him that in accordance with the instructions issued by Parliament, I would proceed with the greatest caution. I knew the responsibility that I had assumed; I knew how precious to our country were the lives of the youths entrusted to my care; I also knew that the honour of our national flag was linked up with the squadron. I said that we would leave Orbetello in the spirit of the old-time navigators, who set out to explore distant continents, determined to do their utmost to fulfil the task they had undertaken, but fully aware of the difficulties they had to encounter, and therefore resolved not to act in a foolhardy manner. However, if all the conditions which I anticipated were realised, we would make the flight from Iceland to Labrador without a hitch. But should bad weather or any other unforeseen contingency make the crossing too risky, I would not hesitate to order the squadron to return home. A more auspicious moment for making another attempt would be certain to present itself later.

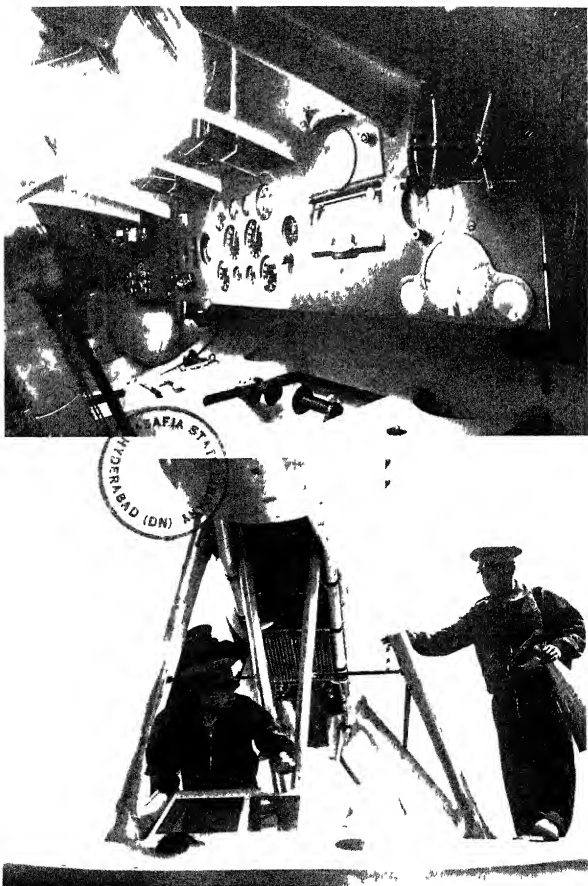
The Duce was thoroughly reassured in consequence

of my words. He is a man who values moral courage as highly as he does physical courage, and is convinced that a real soldier should possess both.

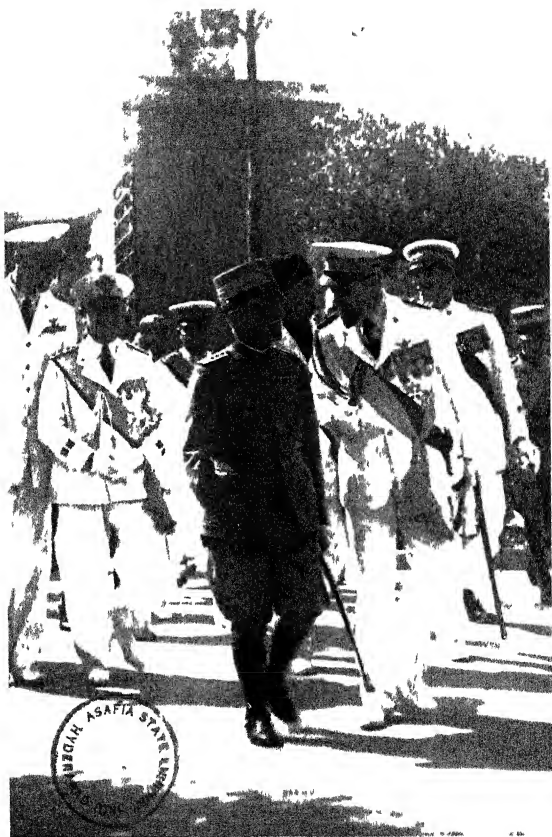
After my visit to the Duce, I requested a private audience with His Majesty the King. According to my usual custom on the eve of important aeronautical trips, I was anxious to lay before him the details of the coming expedition. The King greeted me with his usual charming courtesy. He invited me to sit by his side on a divan, and scrutinised with the most meticulous attention the special publications dealing with the plan of the double flight across the Atlantic. I discussed the details of the enterprise with him. When I had finished he expressed his admiration at the result of the arduous and intensive work I had performed during the course of two years.

Then the King started to tell me about his own trips to the polar regions in bygone years in quest of reindeer. He gave me a graphic picture of dense fog-banks which would descend suddenly on the unwary traveller, blotting out everything, so that one could hardly see an inch ahead. He told me that his first experience of these dense grey masses was just as he had disembarked. It was absolutely impossible to see the men by his side, he assured me. He added that on many occasions in order to get back to his ship he had to depend on the joint pilotage of his comrades and the sound of the siren.

I told the King that the Atlantic fliers had carried out long trial flights through dense banks of fog which did not cause them any alarm, because the ordeal was never too protracted. I pointed out to him that it had been arranged that in case of fog each aviation platoon should take care that in alighting there should be a three minutes' interval between one machine and another, and that training in special manoeuvres for keeping a safe margin of distance between planes in foggy weather had been carried out. The individual platoons would be in a position to keep in touch with the captains of whalers by means of wireless and rockets. Finally, I assured him that at any rate our meteorological service would be quite sufficient to give an adequate forecast for the ten



THE CABIN OF AIR-MARSHAL BALBO'S CRAFT WITH PHOTOS OF HIS MOTHER,
HIS WIFE, AND HIS SONS
BALBO AND LIEUT.-COLONEL CAGNA ON BOARD THE COMMANDER'S CRAFT



THE KING AT ORBETLLO FOR THE REVIEW OF THE CREWS OF THE
AIR ARMADA

or twelve hours that it would take to fly from Iceland to Labrador. As he said good-bye to me, the King assured me that he was extremely delighted with my arrangements, expressed heartfelt wishes for my success, and requested me to convey his greetings to the crews of the Atlantic squadron.

May was now drawing to a close. I would have preferred to spend the last weeks now remaining at Orbetello, but a series of engagements, including several important sessions of the Grand Council, detained me at Rome. On May 24th, the anniversary of the entrance of Italy into the Great War, I was informed that the "I-Balb," the flying-boat which was to carry me across the Atlantic, was ready. I immediately flew with Bisco on the triple-motor *Savoia Marchetti* craft to Sesto Calende. Having stayed at Sesto just long enough to smoke a cigarette, I jumped aboard my machine with my trusty Cagna and with Major Pezzani of the Aeronautical Engineering Corps, who had looked after every detail of the construction of the machines for the flight, and had taken special pains in planning the "I-Balb." Nobody knew my S 55 as well as he did, and I felt that his assistance aboard my new craft would be extremely valuable to me. I immediately expressed a desire to test the wireless mechanism on the plane, which was in charge of Sergeant-Major Berti, whom few could equal for knowledge of his apparatus and devotion to work. In charge of the motors was the trusty Lieutenant Capannini, who had been with me on my flight across the South Atlantic.

We set off to the accompaniment of the deafening roars of the motors, which reminded me forcibly of the din of the Schneider thrills. The shores of Lake Maggiore re-echoed the note of triumph. Presently the blue outline of the distant Alps—a semicircular ring of jagged peaks—stood out against the horizon. The broad plains of Padua spread out beneath us, but we had no time to gaze with rapture on it; we were fast approaching the Ligurian Apennines with their humpy, barren peaks.

It was dead calm and the visibility was splendid as we cleared them, which we did with the greatest ease,

and then dived like lightning towards the sea. We were flying at the moderate speed of 142 miles an hour. From Portofino I cut right across the open sea in the direction of Orbetello. Before mooring I put the motors at full speed and flew over the landing-stage at a speed of not less than 175 or 180 miles an hour. The first trial run of my machine could not be more perfect. When we landed I gazed on it with the rapture of a mediæval knight saluting his thoroughbred courser.

It so happened that on that day a memorial slab was being unveiled at San Vincenzo to the brothers Magdalo and Piero Ambrosino, two aviators who crashed into the Tyrrhenian Sea, the former in 1930, and the latter in 1931. We flew to San Vincenzo, took part in the simple dedication ceremonial, after which I returned with Cagna and Longo to my lonely tower.

CHAPTER IV

A MINOR ACCIDENT

ON June 4th Ariosto Year was inaugurated at Ferrara. It was a good opportunity for another trial flight and for attending the pageant of St. George which brought many friends of mine from remote parts into the city, and lent an atmosphere of romance and poetry to the days of revel. But above all my visit to Ferrara gave me an opportunity of saying good-bye to my mother. It would not do for me to show too much emotion in her presence, and the atmosphere of festivity pervading Ferrara just provided me with a way of hiding my real feelings at the moment of departure. And so I looked smilingly into the clear, serene eyes of her whom, so people tell me, I resemble so closely in features. It was her lot, a little over a year later, to say farewell to me with pride and confidence on my departure for the strangest climes in the world.

A day full of so many contrasts closed with this farewell, which, instead of distressing me, cheered me tremendously and gave me hope. While I was saying good-bye to my mother and my sisters, the sections of the pageant from various districts, their banners flying in the wind, were passing under the windows of my house with blazing torches and bands playing, clad in the picturesque garb of that golden age when Ferrara was in the zenith of its artistic and military splendour.

Farewell, city of mediæval glamour and mystic dreaming! Sterner tasks await me than the delightful one of basking in the memories of thy pristine splendour.

I spent another week in the capital, and on the twelfth day of the month I took over command of the Orbetello squadron.

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Alongside the landing-stage of the Lido of Rome the two other flying-boats that were to be attached to the headquarters staff as auxiliary and exploring vessels were moored. They were the machines in charge of Captain Biseo and Captain Questa.

Both these men took part in the previous expedition. In the flying order of the North Atlantic Squadron itself they followed immediately behind my plane, one on my right and the other on my left. I reckoned on being able to avail myself of their services for special emergencies. For instance, if we had to encounter dense fogs they could be sent in various directions on scouting work. Again, if anything went amiss with my wireless I could use theirs. Both men were first-rate officers. Biseo had been for years adjutant to General Valle, Chief of Staff, had a most intensive technical knowledge, and was gifted with an ultra-fervid enthusiasm as an inventor. Our planes were equipped with a wonderful instrument which bears his name. Captain Questa was an exceptionally capable navigator and an excellent marine aviator. They were both very charming fellows, and I felt sanguine that at the end of our trip I should be loud in my praise of their assistance.

Off we went in mass formation. It was 10 a.m. The sky was clear and bright. Our eyes followed the line of the Tiber towards Rome with the great dome of St. Peter's dominating its many towers and spires.

Two years ago, on my final departure from Rome, my wife came to say good-bye to me at Orbetello. On this occasion, however, she cannot pluck up courage to be present at our farewell banquet. She is afraid that she will show traces of her internal anguish in the presence of my comrades. And so she meets me at Ostia. I share with my fellow-aviators the charming superstition that our womenfolk, who are nearest and dearest to us, bring us good luck. Who more fit than they to influence our destiny by their good wishes and prayers?

And so I make my wife enter my flying-boat; I get her to take my seat and touch the controls with her hands. I want her spirit to take possession of my little aerial nest, and to remain there with me as I cross the

ocean. Over the lonely stretches of the Atlantic she will fly with me towards our lucky star. On the dashboard which faces me is a photographic triptych—my old mother, my wife and my little girls. Tiny pictures which glowed before my eyes even during the night at Bolama. There is no photograph of Paolo, my youngest child, with his rebellious fair curls, whom I call Garibaldi—a fair, rosy-cheeked little chap aged three years. My wife is anxious that I should have his picture too, and asks me why I show such partiality for the girls. But I point out to her that it is my personal belief that only women have the gift of bringing luck to one. Men do not count, I assure her, in this respect, and after all, my little Paolo is a man. However, my wife insists, and I have to give way. And so Paolo will have his photograph aboard my flying-boat.

Our farewell is a hurried one—just a kiss. Aviators must not allow their emotions to get the better of them. A few minutes later as I am skimming in my humming machine along the surface of the water within a few yards of the landing-stage, I see my wife. Just a fleeting glimpse. I wave my hand from the window. Good-bye!

As my plane glides swiftly along the water, alternately skimming and rising above the surface, we feel a dull bump under the right hull just at the moment when the machine is about to rise into the air. What is the matter? Something solid has struck the plane while it is going at a speed of over 75 miles an hour. There is just a moment of tense anxiety. Luckily we are clear of the surface of the water. Later on, at Orbetello, we discover that the sheeting of copper over the bottom of the right hull is very much indented. Probably we struck a bit of driftwood just at the moment when we were taking off. The machine was only barely grazing the surface of the water at the moment of the bump. Had it struck the floating log a few seconds sooner while the hulls were three-quarters submerged at the start of the taking off, the impact would have been disastrous. The hull would not have been able to withstand the crash. The plane would most certainly have been very

seriously damaged—to say the least of it. Just a freak of fate—a lucky one for us, this time!

After thirty minutes' flight we cross Mount Argentario and are skimming gracefully over the waters of Orbetello.

On the great white square of the landing-stage in two groups, each two files deep, the crews of the first and second flight respectively of the Atlantic squadron are lined up. Immediately behind them are the giant silvery outlines of the flying-boats which have been drawn up outside their hangars in horizontal lines.

A bugle blast resounds along the landing-stage. The order "Attention!" rings out. The men's eyes, glowing like stars, look fixedly ahead in unison. General Pelligrini in a few simple words addresses me, and refers to my comrades as "a hundred hearts of steel." I reply with equal brevity, as I feel that mere rhetorical efforts would be out of place:

"Officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers! I am taking over from to-day the command of your eight platoons with the firm resolve to lead you to victory in the skies of the North Atlantic. First of all, I wish to say a few words in memory of the members of our squadron who have passed away. Under the leadership of the unforgettable Colonel Umberto Maddalena, they are keeping a watch from the infinite spaces of the eternal realms on the destiny of our glorious enterprise.

"Officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers! As your commander and as your comrade, I greet you all. I am well aware of the courage of each one of you from the General to the most recent recruit, and I am prepared to lead you, feeling perfectly confident that you will do your duty.

"I am well aware of the enormous difficulties in our path, but I know that I can rely on your absolute sense of devotion to the glorious Italian Air Force. . . .

"You will all realise, I know, that we are entrusted with a mission fraught with great possibilities for our country's prestige and for human progress, and therefore I am confident that you will resolutely face whatever is in store for us. And whatsoever fate awaits us, it will be the fate of pioneers.

" Officers, non-commissioned officers and airmen ! Under the azure sky of our native land let us once more renew our oath to be soldiers worthy of our victorious King, in the spirit of the grandeur of ancient Rome, which was revived by the Duce of Fascist Italy.

" Comrades, Long live the King ! Long live the Duce ! "

With one loud voice they re-echo my last words. It is the chorus of 115 men ready to die if necessary in the execution of their duty. There is nothing histrionic about their bearing, however, at this moment. Their faces are stern and set. Not an eyelid quivers.

Their chaplain, Don Carlo Ferrari, so well known to every one of them, now steps forward. He blesses the men and the machines.

Again a bugle blast. " Dismiss ! " rings out the order. The serried ranks break up, and the young pilots swarm round me, wreathed in smiles.

The machines intended for the Atlantic crossing are officially 24 ; there is an extra one which is supposed to accompany us only to Reykjavik. The men aboard her, however, hope that they will be permitted to cross the Atlantic with us. This makes a total of 100 fliers. In addition to these, there are fifteen others, between officers and non-commissioned officers, who will start with us from Orbetello. On my plane is Major Pezzani of the Aeronautical Engineering Department, who has such a wide practical experience that he was able, in the course of one trip, to advise us by wireless as to the steps that should be taken to meet unforeseen contingencies, and then there is Second-Lieutenant Engineer Antonio Chiodi, an extra pilot with a first-class certificate, who has requested and obtained permission to fly with us, and will look after the cinematographic apparatus aboard during the voyage. In addition there are some specially trained mechanics and engineers who are to accompany us as far as Reykjavik. And so, all told, there will be 115 men and 25 planes.

This year we shall be more strict than in former years in refusing the general public admission to the landing. Straggling visitors disturb and tire us. We find that

we have to be repeating the same platitudes and giving the same petty details of information hundreds and hundreds of times. And then we have to keep smiling all the time.

To obviate a repetition of this needless trouble, we have fixed the following notice at the entrance to the landing-stage :

“ All the friends and comrades, who, actuated by the noblest and most generous impulses, come to wish us luck, interrupt our preparations, and cause us to lose valuable time. We beg them to postpone their greetings until our return.”

CHAPTER V

ADVENTURES OF THE *ALICE*

FROM June 14th onward all the days are fine. Unfortunately the news that we receive that the *Alice* has not yet succeeded in reaching Cartwright, on account of the floating icebergs which the Gulf Stream carries southwards, is depressing. It continues its tedious cruising from Newfoundland to Labrador. Between these is the Strait of Belle Isle, a bit of sea well known to navigators of the North Atlantic, because it is frequently encumbered with icebergs, which render a passage through it rather risky and sometimes impossible.

As a rule the icebergs do not melt until the end of May. In the beginning of June, however, the passage ought to be clear, and with prudent navigation ships ought to be able to reach the desolate coast of Labrador, because at the approach of the first real summer heat the melting of the ice proceeds with great rapidity, and sometimes in the course of a few days there is not a trace of a berg anywhere in that region. Unfortunately that is not the case this year. Consequently, the *Alice*, after a vain effort to get through the Strait of Belle Isle, which is studded everywhere with mountainous icebergs, had to back out and take shelter in Gringet Bay. For days on end the captain of the ship, his crew and the journalists aboard have to gaze helplessly on the coast of Labrador, which is within a few miles of them, but is absolutely unapproachable under the circumstances. They endure the torments of Tantalus through June 13th, 14th and 15th.

On June 16th, a report from the ship informs us that strong easterly winds still continue to cause enormous icebergs to drift against the coast of Labrador, and that

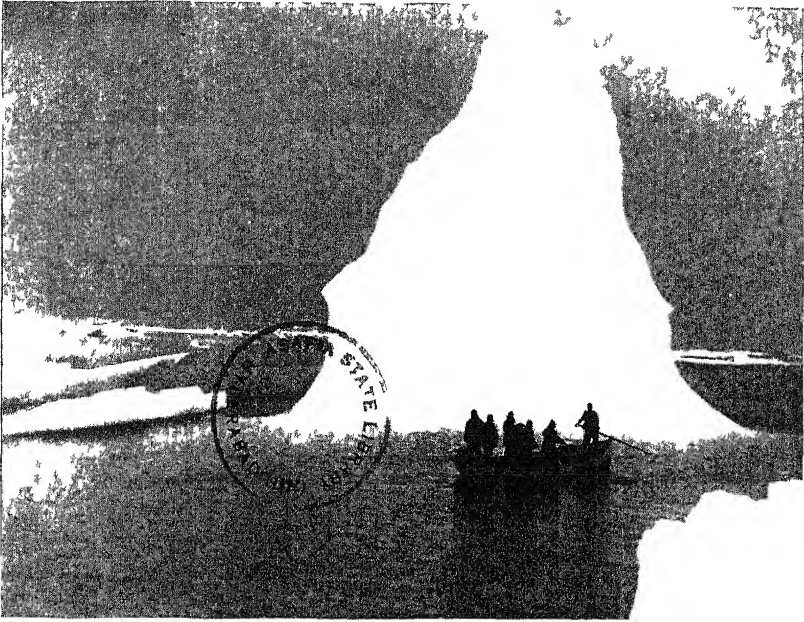
an attempt to navigate the strait might prove extremely risky. The report adds that two steamers, one of them a vessel of 12,000 tons, have been wrecked by striking an iceberg, while others have been damaged. We further learn that there is a dense fog over the northern coast of Canada, and over the Strait of Belle Isle.

A certain international newspaper is now circulating throughout the world a report that our ship has been seriously damaged as the result of running on hidden reefs. Of course this is just a baseless rumour, the outcome of a malicious hope that the Italian enterprise will fail.

It is true, however, that we cannot leave Orbetello before the *Alice* reaches her destination. She is to be our wireless station, our refuelling base and storehouse, and also our floating hotel at Cartwright. If the *Alice* is lost, our enterprise would become problematical, if not utterly impossible. It would mean that we would have no base at Cartwright, and we could not afford the time that would be needed to provide an alternative base before starting our Atlantic flight. Cartwright is on a desolate shore, a little settlement consisting of twenty wooden huts. Its bay, which is deserted in winter, is transformed into a fishing-station in summer. It has no means of communication with the outside world.

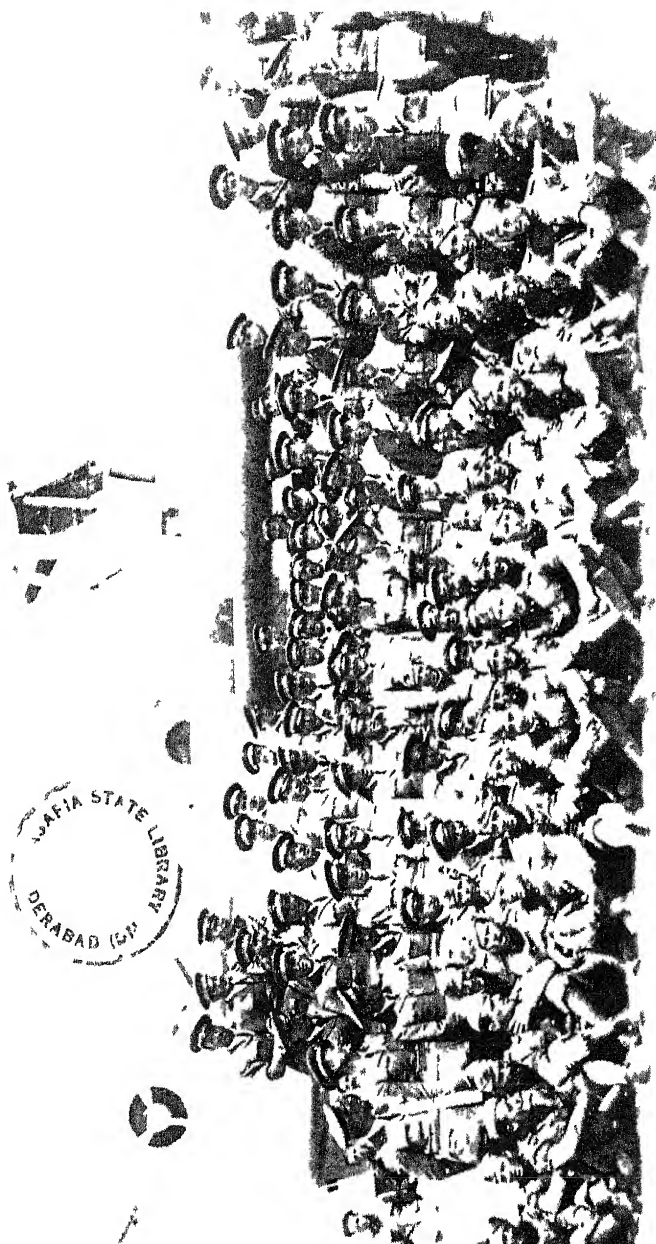
We spend days in a state of painful anxiety. The thing is getting on my nerves. On June 16th I decide to send an ice-breaker to the *Alice* in order to fetch the journalists as well as the stores ashore. By a lucky coincidence an ice-breaker, the *Ungava*, happens to be in the Bay of St. John's in Newfoundland, as well as the *Senef*, the little tanker belonging to the Standard Oil Company. We have no alternative. I give instructions to make use of the *Ungava*. The *Alice* is scarcely 900 tons, and has no watertight compartments. An impact with an iceberg would send her to the bottom at once. We have no grounds for hoping that even during the next few weeks the icebergs will have melted. A belt of atmospheric depression persists along Belle Isle Strait.

It will take at least four days for the *Ungava* to reach the *Alice* in Gringet Bay. It will take at least as many



A GIANT ICEBERG NEAR THE COAST OF LABRADOR
THE ALBATROSS BOUND IN GREENLAND BAY NEAR NEWFOUNDLAND

PICTURES AND CHRONICLES OF THE ALIYADA



more to get to Cartwright afterwards. And meanwhile here we are helpless at Orbetello. The suspense is dreadful to us. We follow with the keenest anxiety the difficult battle of the *Ungava* in Belle Isle Strait. But at length she reaches the *Alice*. All the stores, the staff for the Labrador base and the journalists are transferred to the *Ungava*. The crew alone remain aboard the *Alice*. The *Ungava* has no fear of the ice. So all is well with us once more.

We calculated, of course, that the *Alice* should reach Labrador as soon as the Strait of Belle Isle was clear. Instead of this, however, a most extraordinary thing occurred. The little Italian ship was no sooner relieved of her valuable cargo than she boldly turned her prow towards Cartwright, and thanks to magnificent steering, worked her way among the icebergs into the channels running through the ice-floe, got through the strait and reached the little station which she had been cut off from for weeks, long ahead of the icebreaker or any other vessel. There was a note of triumph in the telegram I received from Captain Balilla Longo telling me of his exploit. He had been very imprudent, and had run a terrible risk, but what was I to do about it? After all, in an expedition like ours success justifies any risk undertaken for the glory of the flag. Instead of a reprimand I send him a message of congratulation. The *Alice* had beaten the ice-breaker! And when we got news that the ice-breaker had reached port, we breathed freely at last. The base at Cartwright was now secure!

The delay which had been entailed by the difficulty in landing at Cartwright had preyed on the nerves of the crews at Orbetello, who had been awaiting from day to day the order to set off. Still not one man showed evidence of the anxiety that he felt. Personally, I had made up my mind that I would not start until all arrangements were made to ensure the maximum margin of safety for our squadron. Better a delay of a few days than a leap in the dark.

Furthermore, there was a prolonged spell of bad weather in the Alpine regions. We made good use of our period of enforced waiting by testing our wireless

equipment daily. I kept in constant communication with the wireless stations in Europe and America. More than thirty stations in Italy, Holland, Greenland, Labrador, Canada and the United States were in touch with Orbetello before our departure.

A few exceptions were made during our spell of waiting to the rigorous ban on permitting strangers to enter the landing-stage. The secretary of the Fascist Party, Signor Achille Starace, along with vice-secretaries Adinolfi and Marpicati and administrative secretary Marinelli, arrived at Orbetello. As on the eve of the previous expedition, the pilots received their badges from the Fascist Party. The whole Atlantic squadron was lined up on the quadrangle of the landing-stage under the command of Colonel Longo when the hierarchy of the Party, accompanied by Pellegrini and myself, arrived for the distribution of the badges. There were no long speeches. I introduced my men to Signor Starace, who in a few words emphasised the deep significance which the Party attached to the ceremonial. The badge bore the inscription: "The Tenth Year of the Revolution." Fascism has recorded our enterprise among its most glorious records. Every pilot is an aerial message of the confidence which radiates from Rome over the whole world.

During the course of this little ceremony we felt that we were co-operating in the progress of civilisation and in the establishment of peaceful relations between the nations—a mission which is in accordance with the destiny of our race.

The secretary of the Party, essentially a soldier himself, did not conceal his joy at finding himself among soldiers. These young men standing before him he regarded as the warriors of the air. They were to wear their black shirts as they crossed the ocean; they were to bring to the trans-Atlantic Italians a message of brotherhood and to give them a proof of their noble Fascist spirit.

On the eve of the previous crossing Signor Starace, who was then vice-secretary of the Party, brought me some amulets. On this occasion he turned up with a charm which could be put to practical purposes. It was a cigar-

cutter fitted on the apex of a wild-boar's tooth of enormous size. We who, like all aviators, boast that we are very superstitious, although we are not really so, were delighted with this charm. Does anybody really believe in witchcraft nowadays? Personally I don't think so—but it is an amusing pastime for all that. And then who could tell? We might find very good use for the cigar-cutter. Who could tell how many cigars we would smoke before we reached America?

Apropos of talismans against bad luck Starace's device started hosts of others. The Fourth Group of the Black Shirts, including almost all the southern militia, sent me a magnificent coral horn, on which the following motto was inscribed in gold lettering: "Sciú ,sciú, ciuvette!" The translation is "Be off, be off, screech-owl!" It was an augury that no bird of this species should come near us while we were crossing the Atlantic. Incidentally, our friends seemed to forget that we were very unlikely to encounter screech-owls while crossing the Atlantic. It was far more likely that we would find plenty of them later on when we would come down from the clouds and become modest pedestrians again. Well, at any rate, as I did not believe in talismans, I passed on mine to Longo, who hung it up in his cabin.

In the quadrangle at our landing-stage we had a miniature zoological garden, whose inmates included two romantic-looking antelopes, and a rather placid little donkey, "Marco," with an almost human expression in his drowsy eyes. One of our pilots, to beguile the tedium of our enforced idleness, caused by the *Alice* being held up at Belle Isle Strait, painted poor little Marco with black and white stripes like a zebra. Not that Marco objected in the slightest. Gazing placidly ahead, he just alternately cocked up first one ear and then the other during the process of his transformation.

At a short distance from Orbetello the Marquis and Marchioness Guglielmi lived in their castle at Montalto di Castro. They were both very dear friends of mine, and were most anxious to come to see us. I was in a quandary, as the ban against entrance to the landing-stage applied to all alike. Guglielmi, however, adopted

a clever ruse. Some well-known American and English diplomats happened to be his guests. Well, one day I was informed that these distinguished foreigners were at the gate, and that they requested permission to enter. There was nothing for it but to admit them at once, and with all the honours suitable for such an occasion. And so the Ambassador of the United States, Mr. Long, entered, accompanied by Councillor Alexander Kirk and Captain Francis Brady, air attaché, Sir John Graham, the Ambassador of Great Britain, and Lady Graham ; and, of course, with them entered their hosts, the Marquis and Marchioness Guglielmi. I chuckled internally at the success of Guglielmi's clever stratagem.

Our visitors were enraptured with what they saw. We brought them to the landing-stage where a south-westerly gale was blowing that made it difficult to keep one's feet. Every other minute I was afraid that the ladies would be blown into the water. But they laughed at my fears.

The flying-boats, which for several days past had been completely overhauled, and were drawn up in flight formation, had settled down in the water to the maximum point of immersion. I informed my guests that in addition to fuel each machine had a vast supply of spare parts, including even metal propellers. I was kept busy answering a host of questions. I refused point-blank, however, to comply with the request of the ladies, for permission to visit the barracks. The men were hardly presentable in their fatigue uniform, which consisted just of a pair of bathing shorts.

I next led my guests to the bar where we offered them the usual vermouth. The ladies mentioned that they had seen an officer with photographs of the flying-boats. We were delighted to present them with copies which were signed by all the members of the crew.

As I was handing copies of the photographs to Lady Graham, who was to leave Italy in a few days, I expressed the regret on her departure of all my countrymen who had known her during the years of her stay among us. I also expressed to the Marchioness Guglielmi, whom I knew to be indefatigable in the cause of charity, and whom I had frequently seen presiding over the committee

of the Institute of the Blind Victims of the War, my own gratitude and that of all my comrades for her heartfelt good wishes for the success of our enterprise.

Although the discipline at Orbetello was very strict, it must not be assumed that I tried to put a damper on the youthful exuberance of my men. A pedantic formalist is almost invariably a very bad pilot. And so not only was a spirit of jollity allowed, it was even encouraged. We wanted to be gay conquerors of the ocean.

CHAPTER VI

AIR-MARSHAL BALBO CRASHES

MONSIEUR COT, the French Minister of Aviation, sent me a most cordial message on June 16th, of which the following is an extract :

“ If your return journey should permit you to arrange for a landing at Paris or in any part of French waters, we shall be delighted to welcome in our territory the conquerors of the Atlantic.”

In my reply I stated that the greetings from our comrades in France, expressed with such frank sincerity, found a responsive echo in our hearts.

“ Your message,” I went on, “ has touched me very deeply, and has also touched very deeply the crews of the Second Atlantic Squadron. What our fate will be I know not, but at every moment and in every place during the course of our coming enterprise we shall feel that we are in close touch with our comrades of the glorious French Air Force. I hope that we shall visit Paris on our return journey.”

I also received farewell greetings from my native city, which took this opportunity to testify to us once more its Fascist faith and its brotherly love. The following is the text of a telegram from the Federal Secretary, Consul Chierici :

“ Your brothers and comrades of Ferrara, the black shirts whom you have always led along the path of their most arduous duties, undertaken for their country and for the Duce, greet you with a cry of love which voices our most sincere good wishes for your enterprise and our firmest hopes in you. The soul of fighting Fascism, the true Fascist spirit, ascends into the air in company with

your mighty wings, to accompany you and escort you through the mysterious paths of the skies of the world, in which the rhythmic triumphal chant of your engines will tell the admiring nations of the revival of the spiritual power of Fascist and Roman Italy, which has been the achievement of the Duce. Ferrara awaits your triumphant return with unshatterable confidence."

Moreover, the Honourable Signor Diaz and the Honourable Signor Gianferrari, the "Aces" Ferrari and Donati, Signor Marchetti, the builder of our flying-boats, and Engineer Cattaneo, who was responsible for the construction of our engines, came to wish us godspeed.

Unfortunately the days went by without any improvement in the meteorological reports. A fierce gale continued to rage in the Alps and over all northern Europe. Very violent storms swept the Swiss slopes every day. Dense masses of cloud brooded over all Germany, making visibility negligible, while in the Italian mountains there were such devastating cyclones, accompanied by terrific hailstorms, that practically day after day even the civilian air services were suspended. It was impossible, consequently, for us to start. In good weather the entire flight from Orbetello to Amsterdam, a distance of 850 miles, could be carried out in less than six hours. But the crossing of the Alps presented formidable difficulties for a squadron of twenty-five machines which had to ascend at times 12,000 feet into the air.

At an earlier stage of our preparations we had contemplated flying through the St. Gotthard Pass, which commands a chain of lakes and would have given our flying-boats a chance in an emergency to make a landing in one of the little basins nearest to Airolo. However, the Swiss Government forbade a flight over the region, over which none of the international aerial routes are permitted to cut. Consequently we had to pass beyond the Spluga. This entailed a longer crossing over wider Alpine zones without any possibility of alighting anywhere. Fair weather was therefore absolutely essential to us.

The next point to be considered was our return trip from America. It could not be any later than the beginning of August, when squalls begin to sweep over the

North Atlantic. However, we had still two months ahead of us.

And now the position on June 23rd was that while the Cartwright base might be considered quite ready, and already our supplies had been unloaded on the shore of Labrador and the wireless station aboard the *Alice* was functioning splendidly, we were still held up by the foul weather prevailing in Europe. Climatic conditions in Europe were now hampering us just as climatic conditions in America had previously done. Our ill-luck certainly put a severe strain on our patience right until the end of the month.

I may add that every day during this trying period we were cheered by encouraging messages from the Duce, who either telephoned to me direct to Orbetello or got in touch with my adjutant, and exhorted us to give proof of the great trait of the Roman character of remaining staunch and unperturbed when things looked blackest. His serene confidence reassured us, and we felt quite sanguine that a favourable day for our start would come soon.

Meanwhile we took physical exercise daily in order to keep fit. My favourite recreation had been cycling, and I now returned to the pastime of my early youth with great zest, making long trips into the outlying districts. A number of brother officers shared with me every evening the thrill of these exercises on our old push-bicycles.

For all that, there were some of these days of suspense which weighed very heavily on my spirits. One Sunday, after receiving the last bulletins reiterating the tiresome news that the Alps were impassable, I decided to fly to Punta Ala, which is a fair distance from Orbetello, to see my wife and children. It was a happy interlude in this period of tension which was telling terribly on my wife and on the wives of my comrades.

At Torre Ala, an old-world remote nook on the shores of the Tyrrhenian Sea, in the midst of the majestic wooded crags of Maremma, which I reached after ten minutes' flight with Cagna and Baldini, I spent a few hours rummaging among old belongings of mine. Among other things I got my gun again, a splendid "Express,"

and a war rifle fitted with a telescope which I intended to fetch along to Reykjavik and to Labrador in case I got the opportunity of a bit of sport. After breakfast we had a jolly trip among the woods, and I had a chance of testing once more those dear old weapons, which proved to be still perfectly reliable. In the little bay beneath the reefs of Torre Ala was the triple-screw S 66 on which we arrived after a nice run, and moored on a clear calm sea, returning to Orbetello towards twilight.

The S 66 was a first-rate craft, which I understood very thoroughly because of the 200 hours of flying which it had completed since it was made ; 100 hours at least were done under my pilotage. It was the same plane on which I went to Geneva to meet the British Premier, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in order to take him to Rome. On the same machine I was the pilot last April when in company with the Duke of Aosta and the minister, Signor Jung, I made a quick flight from Rome to Libya, and also went from Tripoli to Gadames. A year ago, when it had barely arrived from the builders at Sesto Calende, I approved of its being used in order to carry his mail, which otherwise would have been considerably delayed, to the Duce himself, who was then aboard a warship in the Mediterranean. It was the time of the naval manœuvres, and I had a chance of testing the new machine when it had alighted on the open sea with waves running five feet high. My triple-screw flying-boat had proved itself worthy of the confidence I had in it ; it was a swift and a safe machine. During those days I should really, after the difficult flights which it had carried out, have sent the plane to Sesto Calende to be overhauled. As a matter of fact I intended to send it off to Sesto Calende the very next day, but I did not feel at all uneasy about the short flight from Orbetello to Torre Ala. However, as frequently happens to an aviator, I met with a mishap when I least expected it.

After saying good-bye to my wife and children, I went down to the shore with Cagna and Baldini, and we embarked without the faintest premonition of trouble. The sea was dead calm ; the sun was sinking towards the horizon in cloudless glory. One could not imagine an

easier taking-off. In fact the machine rose from the water with great speed. But when it was about thirty feet above the surface, to the best of my calculation, it suddenly listed to the left.

We did not succeed at the moment in finding out what had occurred, whether a control was out of order or whether an engine had failed. In such a crisis it is always just a matter of seconds, but the recollection of the critical incident remains engraved on the mind with an extraordinary clearness, as though the period of its happening had been much more prolonged. I strained every muscle in my effort to bring the machine round to the opposite side in order to readjust its balance. It was no use, however. Dropping with a tilt to the left at a tremendous speed the flying-boat struck the water with one of its hulls and with the extreme tip of one of its wings and made a tremendous spin as it did so. In the crazy rotary whirl of the machine its left hull sank. The right wing now struck the water. Captain Baldini, who was alone in the wrecked hull, worked his way out through its little window and started to swim vigorously. Cagna and I were perfectly safe.

I called out to Baldini : " Are you hurt ? " He replied : " No." As a matter of fact he had got off with just a sea-bath at an unwonted hour and in an unwonted garb. We were within 200 or 300 yards of the shore. In a few seconds we puffed up the little rubber boat that we had on board, and made for the shore. The sudden crash had occurred before the eyes of my terrified family.

Luckily the machine was apparently not much damaged. All that was needed was to fit on a new left hull. I decided that we would have it brought ashore that very night, and after taking it to pieces in the morning, have it sent to Sesto Calende. I was anxious to return at once to Orbetello because night was coming on and I did not wish my comrades to think that I had met with an accident. Baldini got a change of clothing which he put on after we had jumped into the motor-car, which started off right away. As we were entering the landing-stage I was hoping that no information about the accident had leaked out. Instead I found that rumour had exaggerated

its dimensions. Journalists were swarming around me, begging for news. "Have you met with an accident?" came their anxious query. "No," I answered with a gay laugh. "But what about the flying-boat?" "It's on its way to Sesto," was my airy retort. And then I went to the length of arranging for a telegram which after a little while made my comrades believe that the S 66 had got safely to its destination.

I had deliberately suppressed all information about the accident, because I wanted to avoid the inevitable effects of the news of the crash upon the families of my comrades, now that we were practically upon the eve of our departure. The panicky terror of some aged parent in a remote part of Italy might affect the crews at Orbetello.

I did not, however, conceal the actual facts from the American journalists, as their dailies would not reach Italy until after our departure.

As we pondered over the causes that might have occasioned the crash of the triple-screw flying-boat at the moment of taking-off, we thanked Providence in our hearts for our miraculous escape. We learned that the original listing of the machine to the left was due to the snapping of the control of an aileron. It was decidedly most imprudent on my part to start out with the plane practically on the eve of its being overhauled in the building-yard. And yet after all I felt certain that thereby I had saved the life of some pilot and saved the machine from being wrecked too, because the snapping of the control, which had no effect on us, might have been fatal if the machine were at full flight. It might very easily have occurred on the following day when the plane was on its way from Orbetello to Sesto Calende to be overhauled. Under such circumstances a fatal disaster would have been inevitable. And so it was really an extremely lucky accident for us.

On June 23rd Emilio De Bono, *quadrivir* and Minister of the Colonies, whom I regard with the affection of a brother, arrived from Rome. Dear old De Bono! His fine silken beard, which gives such a piquant expression to his face, trembled with emotion as he greeted me. He

told me that the Duce followed with the most intense interest our daring enterprise in commemoration of the Tenth Year of the Revolution—an enterprise which would secure for aviation in Italy such glory as had never been attained or hoped for by any other nation.

I expressed a wish that he should witness a general rehearsal of the manœuvres for the start of our mass flight, in order that he, as an old soldier, might have an idea of the discipline of our crews. A bugle rang out the "Fall in" signal. The order to embark was given to the crews, who had formed up in a flash on the quadrangle of the landing-stage. I myself stepped with De Bono into my machine while the waters of the lake were churned up by the motor-launches which brought the 115 men of the squadron to their respective machines. By means of the wireless aboard I gave orders to set the engines going, and after a couple of seconds the propellers of fifty boats were spinning while the sky re-echoed their droning noise. In thirteen minutes after the bugle blasts had given the signal to "Fall in," everything was in readiness to start the flight. And at the end of the rehearsal when the boats had returned to the landing-stage I gave orders by wireless to stop the engines and to disembark. The precision and elegance of this final manœuvre, which was carried out on a very extensive anchorage with considerable intervals between the crews, impressed De Bono immensely. His eyes were eloquent with emotion as he turned to me and said :

"What wonderful control you have! Now I understand."

I may mention that De Bono had been the most persistent of those friends of mine who had tried to dissuade me from this second Atlantic flight, which in his kindly solicitude on my behalf, he regarded as a challenge to fate and fraught with very serious risk for myself. The day which he spent with us at Orbetello completely convinced him of the soundness of the arguments which I put forward on one occasion when he asked me what advantage was to be attained by the flight over the North Atlantic which had not been already gained by the flight to Brazil. My reply then was : "I am aiming at serving

the cause of the Air Force in a better and more efficient way." And now on the anchorage at Orbetello De Bono reminded me of those former discussions between us, and concluded significantly: "You were right."

But my greatest moral support I received, as always, from the Duce, who understood the difficulties of our enterprise, and always kept in touch with us. He was our ever-present, invisible, tutelary spirit. He took the keenest interest in all our activities and shared in our anxieties.

His thoughtfulness with regard to myself personally was truly touching. On the eve of a meeting of the ministry which was held towards the end of June, when I asked him if it were absolutely essential that I should put in an appearance, he told me to remain where I was at Orbetello and to take a rest. He added that it was far better for me to stay with my squadron and to give them all the material and moral aid that I could. And from that moment until our departure not a day passed without my comrades getting abundant proof of his unremitting earnestness and preoccupation about our voyage.

Unfortunately the weather in the Alpine regions got worse and worse. It was nothing but one long succession of devastating squalls with the glass steadily falling and persistent atmospheric depression.

On the evening of June 28th it looked as if the weather had decided at length to become more settled. Accordingly, presuming that the crossing of the Alps would now be quite safe, I gave instructions that the signal for the start should be given at dawn on the 29th. At four o'clock sharp my men were on the large square of the landing-stage ready to embark. Before starting we waited for confirmation of the improvement of meteorological conditions on the Alps, where fierce squalls are pretty frequent. Unfortunately the report that was transmitted to me at 5.15 a.m. was decidedly unfavourable. The entire Alpine chain was shrouded in mist as well as a considerable portion of the Paduan plain and the Swiss territory. There was nothing for it but to countermand the order I had issued. The crews, who

had spent twenty-five minutes of feverish expectation, went ashore again and resumed their interrupted sleep.

This persistent ill-luck led me to ponder over the idea of flying over French territory along the Canal du Midi and the Loire and continuing on right ahead towards Ireland. I communicated the suggestion by telegram to Paris, and got a reply that the French authorities placed themselves at our disposal. In fact the French Air Ministry issued instructions to the Bordeaux Aviation Zone to hold in readiness a number of aeroplanes to meet our twenty-five planes near the coast of the Mediterranean in order to escort us across French territory.

But before abandoning our scheme of flying across the Alps, which in itself was a great aerial feat for such a large number of machines, I decided to wait for five days. If at the end of that time weather conditions in the Alpine regions still continued to be adverse, I resolved immediately to fly to Bordeaux.

And so the last days of June went by. I received a telegram from America begging me not to lose heart. It was from Major Reed Laudis, the president of the Illinois Aero Club, urging me not to be in too great a hurry about starting. The Canadian aviators sent me several messages in a similar strain.

Unfortunately all foreigners were not so chivalrous. A comic paper which is published on the other side of the Alps was sent to us, containing a full-page cartoon representing American girls crossing the Atlantic to meet us in paper boats. The suggestion was conveyed in the cartoon that the American girls would get across before we had started. Another paper had a cartoon depicting crowds of poor fools waiting so long on the eastern shores of the Atlantic for the arrival of the Italian Armada that fungi grew on their feet. We were intensely amused at both cartoons. My lads were fully confident that the fair daughters of America would come to meet them and cheer them on American soil. And as for the other jejune joke—well, its creator was doubtless inspired by the fungi growing on his own brain.

Meanwhile Mussolini approved of my scheme of changing our route should the weather not become settled

in the course of the next five days, and we were reassured by his calm, deliberate view of the situation.

On the night of June 30th the weather reports were favourable—at last! The Alpine route was clear, and the forecast for all central Europe was good. And so at last the auspicious hour for our flight had struck.

CHAPTER VII

FLYING OVER THE ALPS

ON the evening of June 30th I order the crews to go to bed early with a view to being fresh for the start. Towards ten o'clock I go for my usual bicycle ride as far as the embankment, accompanied by two or three of my comrades. I take care to make as little noise as possible.

When I have satisfied myself that all my companions have gone to bed I feel more at ease. I must remain awake, however, as our departure is fixed at 4.15 a.m. I have not very long to wait, and I have lots to do during the short time left to me. The final weather bulletins have to be carefully perused, and there are odds and ends of last-minute details to be attended to, such as packing my portmanteau, etc.

The hours fly by quickly, and after a sleepless night I am the first to step on the square at dawn on this memorable July 1st. It is a Mediterranean dawn welling against the azure sky, and stabbing it with sharp spears of light. Then the east assumes a bright indigo hue which dissolves into interblending tints of aquamarine, emerald green and deep crimson. It is the mystic hour of matins when from remote and lonely cloisters angelic voices greet our Lady, the Star of the Sea—the hour of heavenly dreams—the hour when little children in their sleep converse with the angels. It is a dawn which inspires us with visions of the distant land of promise towards which we are about to fly—a land from the spires of whose cities festive carillons greet us.

And now as the seconds pass, the sky deepens more and more into a regal purple, and the waters of the anchorage are just beginning to reflect the tints of the

dawn as the crews form up on the square of the landing-stage.

With soft rhythmic cadences the waves beat against the breastwork of the bank, and surge up the slipway till they catch the gleam of the lamps before they recede into the darkness of the anchorage again. And now boats are plying briskly between the flying-boats and the narrow embarkation steps.

I read the later weather reports which are just fair. The crews prepare to salute the flag, previous to our flight northwards.

The 115 men of the squadron assemble beneath the lofty flagstaff which towers over the anchorage, the hangars and the bright flower beds of Orbetello—the little cosmos which has kept us prisoners for twenty days. The fishermen of Orbetello, San Stefano and Porto Ercole have hardly slept during the past few days; they have heard rumours about our departure, and their shadowy silhouettes are outlined dimly on the sky-line of the hills and the dark slopes of Argentario.

Our flying outfit is very simple. We just slip on the Marus two-piece combination, which makes us look somewhat like divers. We wear nothing over this. Before starting each of us hangs his trousers and jacket on a hook fixed inside a boat. By this arrangement we will not lose much time before we are fit to present ourselves to the public awaiting us on our arrival at the various halting-places on our way.

To-day, however, in view of the projected flight over the Alps, in the course of which we shall have to soar some 12,000 feet in the air, we wear little fur vests inside the jackets of our combinations. Thus rigged out we face the Alps with a thermos flask of hot coffee and a basket of fresh fruit.

The ceremonial of hoisting the flag is usually a very simple affair. But on great occasions, especially when we are about to undertake some big aerial adventure, I always regard it as a very solemn ritual which appeals to the imagination in a very striking way. It is an ideal farewell to our fatherland which sums up our loyalty as soldiers—it is a farewell to the great common family of

all our Italian brothers, a farewell which embodies our affection, our memories and our hopes regarding our people at home and abroad. It is a farewell in which those who are about to face the perilous battle with the skies, and who may be leaving their native land to return no more, epitomise the emotions of their souls with stark sincerity. We all in our secret hearts repeat our determination to conquer or sacrifice our lives for our country. It is a moment of deep religious introspection which makes our hearts beat faster, and increases our energy a hundredfold. It is the viaticum of the brave.

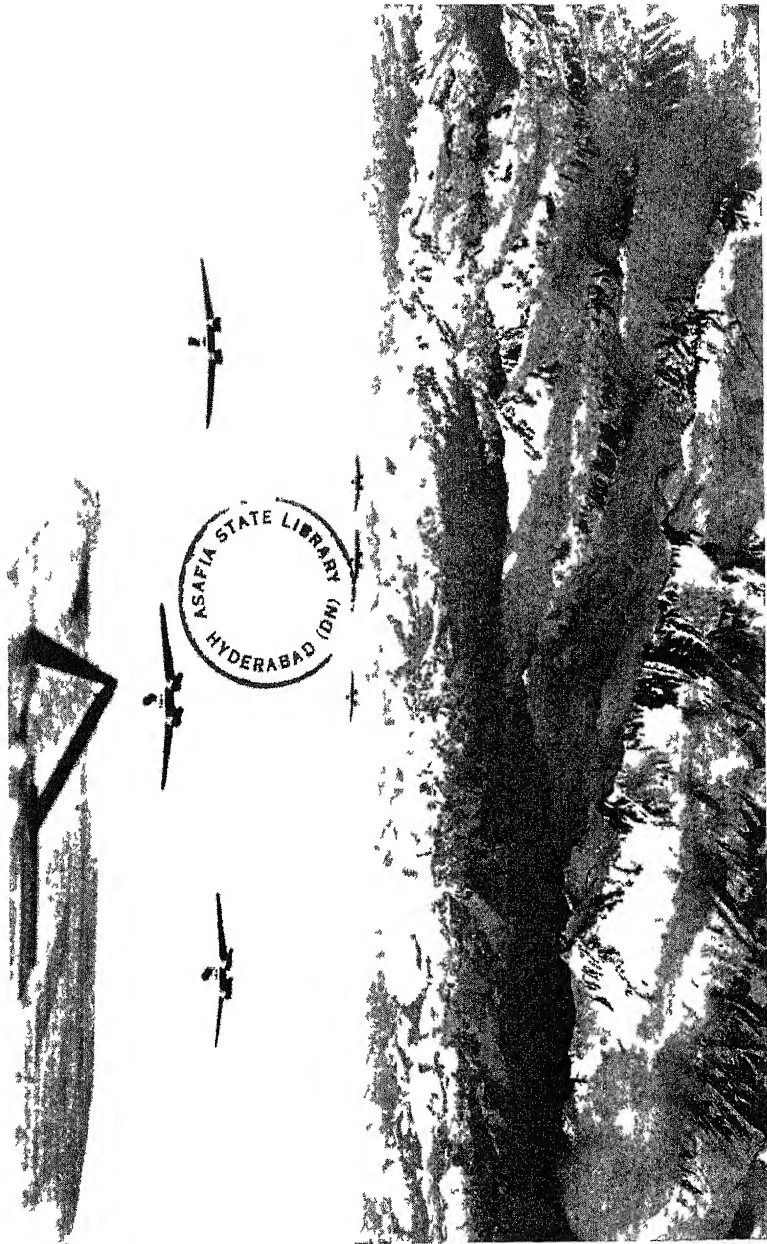
The ceremony of hoisting the flag is carried out an hour earlier than is usual on the occasion of great aerial flights. Usually the flag is run up the moment the sun actually emerges above the horizon. This morning only a streak less deeply blue in tint than the blue of the night which has passed, gleams in the east. A line from Dante: "Soft glow of sapphire in the east" flashes across my mind.

And now all the crews of the squadron are drawn up in a long straight line.

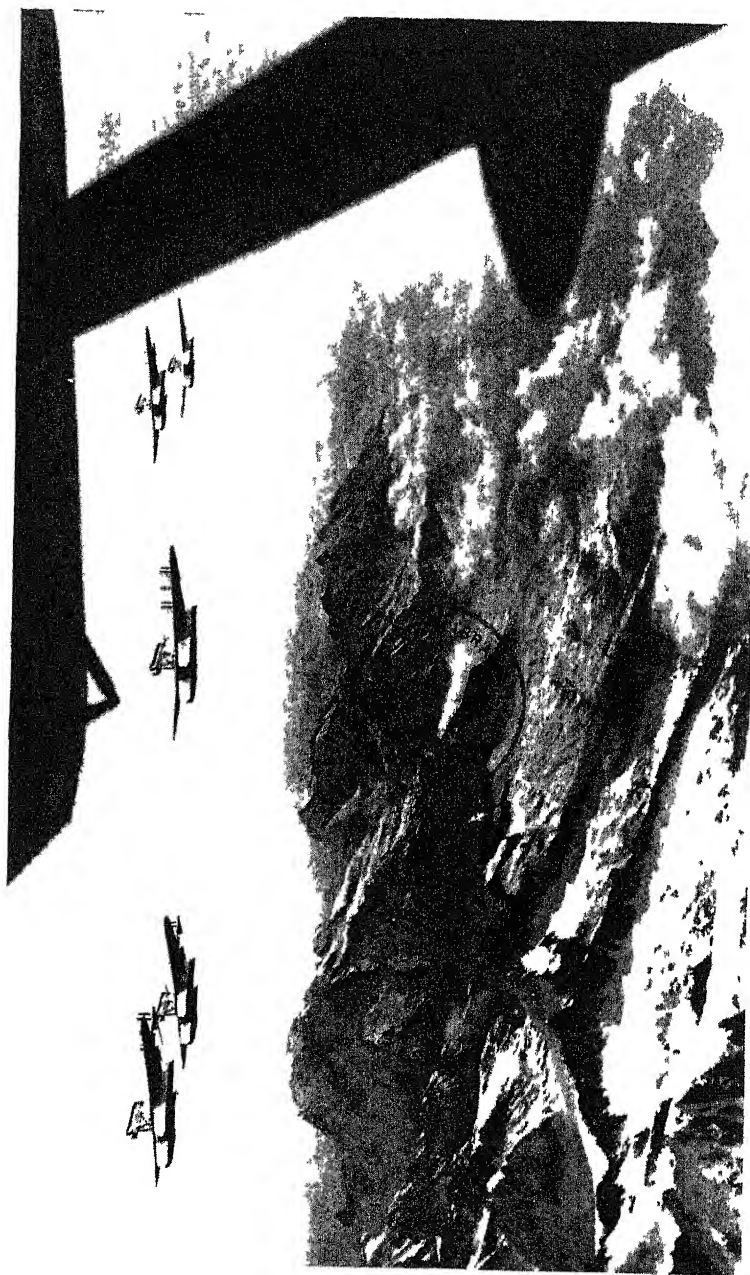
I am a unit in this line myself, heading one of the sections of our marshalled century. Next to me is Pellegrini, and following him are Biondi, Longo, Cagna, Pezzani, and all the pilots, two lieutenant-colonels, one major, thirty-three captains, eleven lieutenants, two marshals, thirty-four sergeants, twenty-two mechanics, in addition to other experts who will leave us at Amsterdam.

There is dead silence. All stand rigidly to attention. A bugle blast rings out. The flag floats slowly up along the tall mast. Its colours, caressed by the breeze, gleam in the morning air. Our eyes follow it as it seems to soar heavenward. The Roman salute is given by 115 men. Then after a minute of hallowed silence the bugle sounds again. I give the order, "Dismiss." The crews shout in unison: "Long live the King."

Pilots, motormen, wireless operators and all the others rush towards the boats which convey them to their respective planes. I wait on the very edge of the quay until the last man, Captain Baldini, has embarked. It



THE FLIGHT OVER THE ALPS



IHI AIR ARMADA FLYING OVER IHI APTS

is now 4.10 a.m. I have been particularly anxious that no member of my family should be with me at this moment. My brother Edmondo was at Orbetello up to yesterday. Being convinced that our departure was postponed he left on the very eve of the day to which I had looked forward with so much anxiety. My wife too has no idea that we are leaving just now. I told her yesterday that I would most decidedly not start to-day, and that she might expect me for breakfast. Parting from one's wife and children is always a very trying ordeal. If I could manage it I should prefer that they should hear of the moment of our arrival at the various halting-places during our flight, but not of the moment of our departure.

The little knot of officers, journalists, photographers, aviators and groundsmen who are standing at the landing-stage respond with emotion to my calls for cheers for Italy, the King and the Duce as the motor-boat moves off from the slipway and fetches me aboard my plane. Presently my engines are in motion, and immediately a deafening chorus is heard from all the other machines. The huge planes revolve around their buoys. Their hawsers hold them in leash for a short while in the maelstrom of foaming water. Then they swing round toward the direction from which they are to take off. The propellers rend the air with an ear-splitting whistle. My machine is the first to start its "take-off" run. It glides along the water at a terrific speed. Soft waves of fresh morning air sweep over me as we rise from the surface. We are in flight now at exactly 4.37 a.m.¹ We encircle the expanse of water in a great sweep twice in order to give the other machines time to take off. I see beyond the ridge of Monte Argentario the azure strip of the sea and the Tyrrhenian beach edged with a white fringe of foam. And beneath me I see all the other machines taking off, platoon after platoon in triangular formation. The last flying-boat lifts from the waters of Orbetello at five o'clock precisely.

I lead the flight with Captain Biseo's plane on my right and Captain Questa's on my left. Ours is the "black

¹ During the course of our flight I am making all my reports by Greenwich, instead of local, time.

star" platoon. A hundred yards behind us is the "black disc" platoon of Pellegrini, Miglia and Borghetti. In their rear are Nannini's and Baldini's platoons—the former a "red star" and the latter a "red disc" one. Behind them again in the same triangular formation are the machines of the second flight, respectively marked with "white stars" and "white discs" and "green stars" and "green discs." Colonel Longo's platoon, a white triangle outlined against the sky, forms the rear-guard of our squadron.

I steer along the coast in the direction of Piombino. Ahead of me a white-sailed vessel is making for the open sea. Along the water's verge stretch the wild outlines of the woods of Maremma.

The twenty-five planes sweep through the ether according to plan with a slight scale of difference in ascent between platoon and platoon. In this way I can see the alignment of the whole squadron at a glance. I enquire by radio how things are going. Platoon after platoon replies: "All right." Our wireless apparatus is functioning magnificently. Every half-hour I send messages to Rome of our steady progress towards our goal.

We have now left Orbetello well in our rear, and before we reach the peninsula of Piombino, a flat strip of land between two hilly crags, is the little rocky eminence of Punta Ala, where at this moment my fair-haired little ones are fast asleep.

The azure sea reflects the tints of an azure sky, whence the sun's rays strike aslant the island of Gorgona, a wild maze of craggy peaks, lying six miles to our left. And over there towards the estuary of the Arno is the King's villa. I send him a radio message: "As they pass over San Rossore the crews of the Second Atlantic Air Squadron turn their thoughts to your majesty, and cry in one triumphant voice amidst the roar of the engines: 'Long live the King!'"

Our squadron covers the 180 odd miles between Orbetello and Genoa in one hour and twenty minutes. Our course cuts right over the city, which in the morning sunshine looks a fit setting for the abodes of demigods. Astride on the semicircular background of the hills, it

sweeps down towards the sea, its ancient domain. Above are the highlands, with their shadow-rifted valleys and clefts ; beneath is the dazzling white glory of the houses of the city. The harbour is a forest of masts, smoke-stacks and cranes. Thin wisps of smoke curl skywards to meet the semi-transparent strands of cloud.

Higher we rise as we face the undulating lines of the Giovo Pass, while the city awakes to the deafening roar of our fifty engines and the people swarm into the streets and squares. The Queen of the Mediterranean, who gave us a glorious ovation on our way home from our previous voyage, gives us an enthusiastic greeting to-day. The sea is like a sheet of blue satin whose lustre reflects the dazzling rays of the morning sun. We mentally contrast this azure expanse with the grey northern ocean waste over which we are about to fly. Farewell beautiful blue Mediterranean ! Even your spell cannot hold us back from our adventure.

It is now 8 a.m. Later on we shall learn from the American newspapers that at this moment the Holy Father learned at Rome of our departure, just after he had celebrated Mass, and exclaimed : " They are departing on a mission of peace. May God bless their efforts and aid them during their flight, which can only be productive of benefit to humanity ! "

Yes, God is blessing Italy. We fly over the slopes of the Giovi Pass, which has a vernal freshness in this mid-summer season. Foaming torrents sweep down the mountain sides. And then in a flash the winding ribbon of the stately Po. We cut across the fertile plains of Lombardy, rich with ripe cornfields which chequer the landscape with bright yellow patterns. We steer towards Chiavenna on the extreme verge of Lake Como. A little way beyond the Ticino, on the horizon's verge, the spires and towers of glorious Milan gleam in the splendour of the morning sun.

Just at this moment it occurs to me that I should send our greetings to the craftsmen who built with such skill and loving care those winged machines on which we are now speeding towards our goal. And so I despatch a radio message to Comrade Capoferri, who is president of

the industrial corporations of the province. My words fly on invisible wings towards those fine fellows whose hands constructed our aerial armada.

Now we are on the verge of the Italian-Swiss frontiers. Our machines start to climb higher and higher at a progressive rate.

Before us stretches the long chain of the Alpine system. Gigantic pyramidal masses stab the sky, looking at first almost transparent and ghost-like, but after a while assuming a more solid and rugged form. In bold relief stand out the wild barren crags, the deep ravines, the rugged roads and paths and the channels which the streams have grooved on the slopes of the mountains, the little shady oases of the dense woodlands, and here and there the patchwork quilt effect of the cultivated regions, in which man, fighting a winning battle against the precipitous slopes, has succeeded in sowing his grain and wheat, in developing green stretches of pasturage for his flocks and herds and in trailing the tendrils of his vines.

Higher still! We shall probably eventually touch 13,000 feet. On one side of us are the gleaming icy crags and the scintillating masses of quartz of the majestic Bernina Pass; on the other are the mountains skirting the Levantine, and Val Moggia and Val Toce, stretching away to the four snow-capped peaks of Monte Rosa, whose stately slopes sweep on as far as the eye can reach towards the verge of the open country. And then there are minor mountain peaks, Mattarone, frowning almost perpendicularly over Lake Maggiore, and opposite it, on the eastern bank of Lake Como, the serrated ridge of Resegone.

The atmosphere is as clear as crystal. The sky is cloudless—a boundless azure abyss into which it is a sheer luxury to plunge. The houses beneath us seem smaller and smaller. The towns look like gravel heaps. A road that winds erratically towards a mountain peak seems to be just a very thin ribbon. And now we have left the fir-woods behind us, though just a few lone trees stand out on the forbidding slopes, in an attitude suggestive of an alarmed vanguard. We are now in the region of barren rocks, clothed with lichens of red, grey and greenish tints.

Our flying-boats still continue to climb at such a systematic progressive rate that it would be impossible to give the height which we have attained were it not for the persistent registration of the altimeter.

As we are flying over Mount Splugen I send a radio message to the Duce: "As they fly over the frontiers of their native land, whose glory and power have been restored by your zealous work, the aviators of the Second Atlantic Squadron greet you, their leader, and promise to fulfil to the end their duty as soldiers and Fascists."

It is now precisely 7.26 a.m.

The Alps remain dazzling white and cloudless as far as Mount Splugen. But after we have topped its rugged perpendicular ridge the first clouds appear—a greyish silvery sea stretching towards Milan, and enveloping all the basin that feeds Lake Constance. Actually, while we are topping Mount Splugen at an altitude of 11,000 feet, I see that the clouds ahead of us are between 11,500 and 12,000 feet high. What am I to do? Is it better to pass over or under this wall? After a hurried reflection on the matter I decide to pass over the dense masses rather than incur the risk of finding the valleys buried in clouds and be forced to fly blindly ahead through this region of lofty peaks. I recall the disaster of the BR which was lost two years ago on the Alps near the French frontier.

Now and then a snowy peak emerges for a moment and vanishes again amid the greyish maze of cloud as we climb still higher and higher. The cold becomes more and more intense. And now we cannot see an inch of the landscape. We have touched 13,000 feet. We steer now by the compass in the direction of Zurich. This blind plunge is rather strange and uncanny. Above our head is a sky of an enchanting blue. Beneath is a limitless sea of cloud. At length we see Zurich on our right on its azure lake amid the steep mountains. We have left the menace of the cloud-enveloped peaks behind us.

Never shall I forget my crossing the Alps with twenty-five huge hydroplanes, which in their quest of a pathway to the northern seas had to surmount a barrier 13,000 feet high at the very outset! Never can I forget the blue

gleam of a lake, a jewel set among the crags of the Engadine, in the heart of smiling, verdant valleys and the quivering waters of Silvaplana, which were my last glimpses of the enchanting glories of the Alps seen through a rift in the clouds beneath Mount Splügen.

We are still keeping our alignment. All the planes follow in my wake. As we approach Zurich, a Swiss aeroplane passes close to us and salutes us. We are extremely grateful indeed to our Swiss friends, but we would have been still more grateful had they given us permission to fly through the St. Gotthard Pass. Just a few hours ago as we were crossing over Lake Como I noticed that the Ticino-St. Gotthard route was bright and cloudless. Why did they put such obstacles in our path by refusing to let us go through the St. Gotthard Pass? Would it not have been a nobler gesture to have shown that they appreciated the organised effort of their Italian comrades of the air in the interests of the aeronautical progress of the whole world? Did the Swiss really think that we aimed at espionage in requesting permission to go through the St. Gotthard Pass? Never for a moment had such an idea entered our minds. Well, at any rate, had they acceded to our request our journey would have been shorter and easier and we would not have been obliged to make a tedious and dangerous detour.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AMSTERDAM FATAL CRASH

ON the horizon's verge we see the broad and stately Rhine, the river rich in poetic and legendary associations, which divides and unites so many European nations. It will from now on be our guide until we reach our first stopping-place, Amsterdam.

A softly undulating landscape lies beneath us. The hand of man is visible in the varied and intensive tillage system which adorns its surface with so many rectangular patterns of different tints. At Basilea we drop to an altitude of 5000 feet, because the cold at 13,000 feet makes our teeth chatter, and a piercing blast penetrates our side windows. We fly a little more to the north of Basilea, the triple frontier of Switzerland, France and Germany, which was for five consecutive years from 1914 a zone of bitterly contested engagements. It is now 8.24 a.m.

From Basilea to Strasburg our flight is over French territory on the left bank of the Rhine. We are flying over Strasburg at 8.55 a.m. The Rhine is in full spate. The stormy weather which has prevailed for the past ten days throughout all central Europe, accompanied by very heavy rains, has swollen the great stream into a boiling torrent.

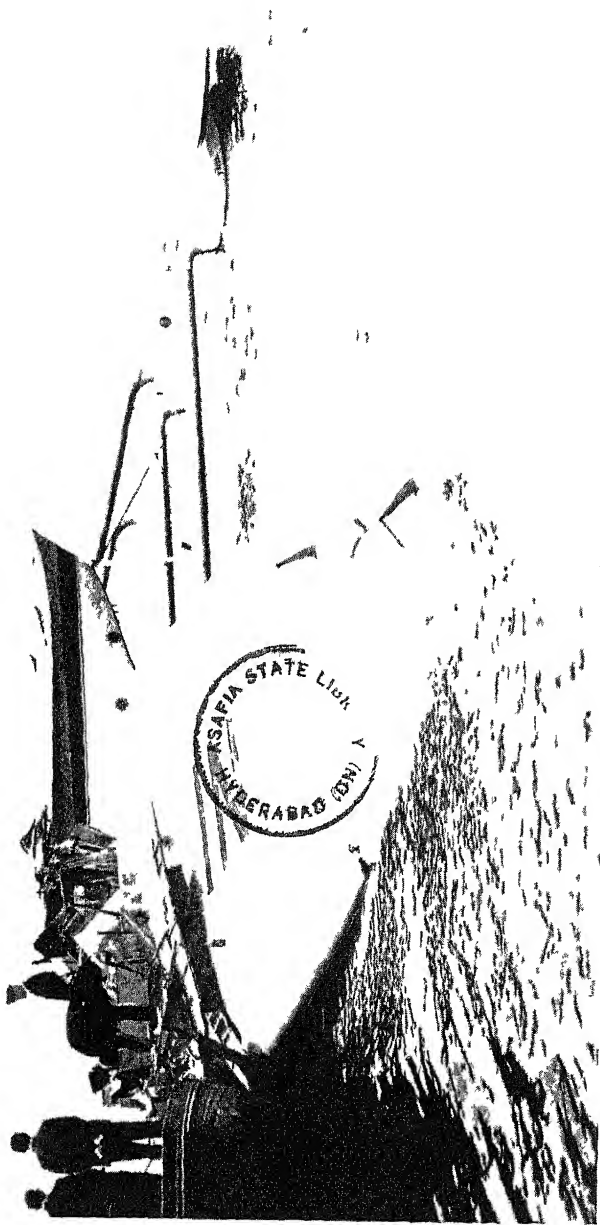
After we have traversed 140 miles in the course of about an hour's flight our machines start to toss in a most troublesome fashion. Cross-currents of gusty winds are battling in the basin of the river, and put a very severe strain alike on our arms and on our patience. It is downright hard work trying to keep such huge machines in line. And eventually the difficulty we have to contend with gets on our overwrought nerves; we

try to divert our minds from our very unpleasant plight by observing the tracts of country flying by beneath us. We relieve one another at frequent intervals. We drop first to 2400 feet, then to 2000 feet and even to 800 feet, but still the tossing, the abrupt pinking and the terrible strain of the controls on our muscles never cease during practically the entire long stretch from Basilea to Amsterdam. It is a great relief to us, however, to observe that the landscape becomes more and more interesting.

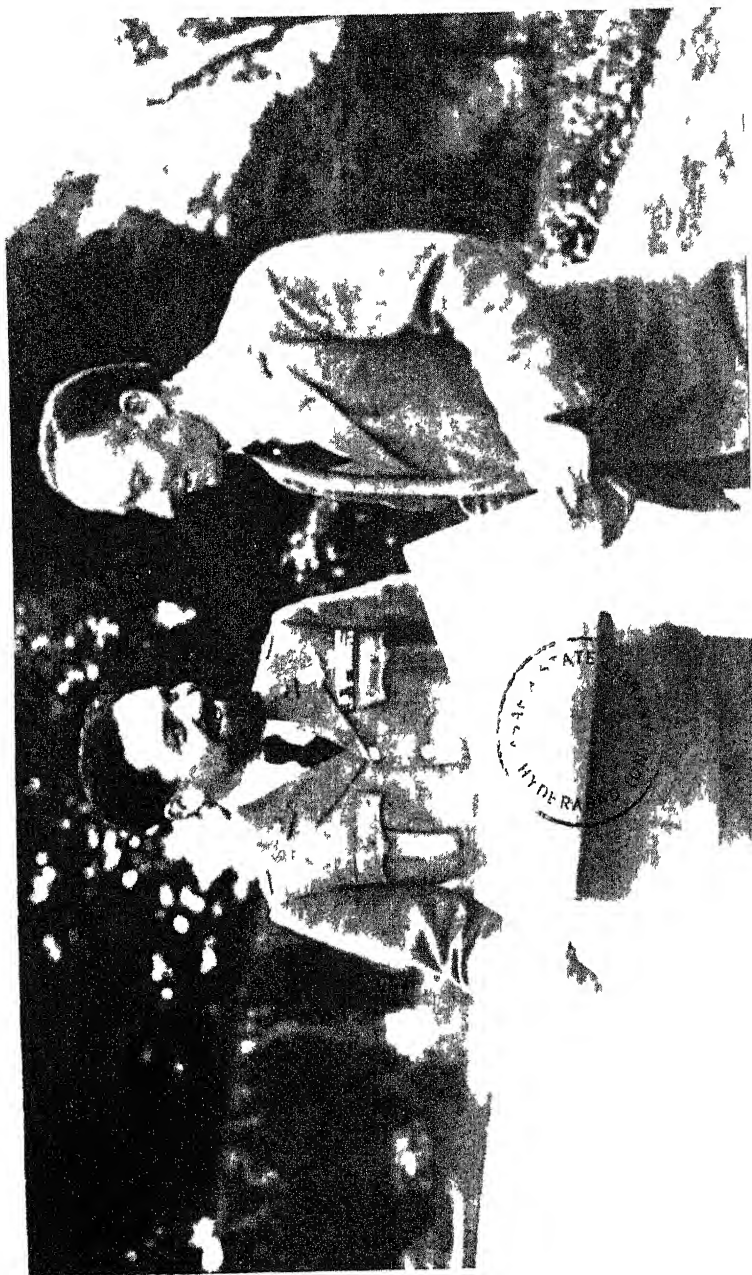
From Carlsbad to Mainz right across the extreme verge of Baden, the Palatine and Hesse, our course lies over one of the most interesting industrial regions in the world. There is a succession of colossal factories covering enormous tracts of country. The dull colour-tones of the cities invest them with a more distinctly Gothic atmosphere—the stamp of the Teutonic fatherland. We pass over the massive marble cathedral of Mainz, whose seven towers are like battlements dominating the city which huddles in their shadow. And now we are crossing the beautiful hills of the Taunus ranges and the winding ribbon of the Moselle which joins the Rhine near Coblenz.

A little below the bridge of Isingen the river spreads out and embraces a labyrinth of verdant islands, many of which are adorned with turreted castles. On the hills on either bank of the Rhine tiers of trellisses of great vines sweep upwards from the water's edge. It is here that the more temperate zone of Germany begins, the region blessed by a gentler sun! The region in which in autumn a golden tint is assumed by the luscious grapes which produce a wine that is the pride of the Germans, a wine that was the glorious nectar of the Nordic banquets and the beverage beloved by the gods of Valhalla. It was among these islands where the eddying current swirls that the poets saw the Lorelei with her dishevelled hair floating to the wind. And mayhap in some remote corner of one of these green islets lies buried for centuries the Nibelungen gold. There are few countries that possess such a rich store of folklore and romantic glamour.

We increase our speed to 145 miles an hour. It strikes



CAPTAIN BAUDIN'S FLYING BOAT AFTER THE IATAI CRASH AT AMSTERDAM



AIR MARSHAL TATT AND LORD LONDONDERRY, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR, CHATTING
IN THE GROUNDS OF MOUNT SULTAN IN NORTHERN IRELAND

us that these waters are too deeply embanked to guarantee a safe anchorage in case of an enforced descent. Luckily all the signals that I have received so far during our flight satisfy me that every machine is travelling with clockwork precision on the route marked out for it.

And now the Rhine changes its course and flows westward in the direction of Cologne. We catch a glimpse of the stately arches of the bridges that bestride its azure waters. We salute its great cathedral, whose spires stab the sky. The mystic symbolism of faith interpreted in stone, the symbolism of mediæval souls appealing to the stern God of the German people. A more Germanic city than Cologne could not be found. Its roofs are sheer and precipitous. They give the impression that they slope down to the pavement. The gables are steep. The dominant colour of the houses is a dark grey.

We leave the city behind us, and fly over a rich and smiling landscape. A network of canals is either fed from or debouches into the river in this beautiful verdant countryside, where the vines grow luxuriantly. It is a thousand pities that we cannot fully enjoy the beauteous panorama spread out beneath us, and indulge in those whims of romantic fancy with the freedom from pre-occupation which a flight through a windless atmosphere would permit. But still the tossing of the machines continues incessantly.

Dusseldorff with its crescent of picturesque villages astride the encircling hills now comes in view. The Rhine makes a detour to the left of the town, then quite suddenly it loses itself among factory chimneys near the suburbs of the city. After this it cuts right through the town, being spanned in its course by magnificent bridges. Beneath us is a panorama of roofs with pointed gothic gables and delicately tapering belfries. To the north is the aerodrome.

After leaving the city we immediately proceed along the left bank of the Rhine. We cross it for the last time at the point where it branches off into the two great streams which conduct it to the sea, the Nether Rhine and the Waal. Now we turn from the mighty river, and

make for the Zuider Zee which expands before us like a huge lake. We now see a typical Dutch landscape, a geometrical pattern of water and meadowland, brimming canals meandering like ribbons of crystal amidst tilled fields and tiny gardens, factories enclosed with hurdles and wooden fences, and equipped with quaint balconies and verandas, which make them appear like toys as we look down on them ; and cowsheds dotted about all over the place. Windmills, whirling their huge sails, greet us as we pass onward. Tiny steamboats are puffing busily hither and thither.

Naarden, Veesp and Muiden, charming old-world little towns, with black and white as the dominant tones of the houses, appear and vanish. On our right lies the greyish-green expanse of the Zuider Zee ; on our left are the countless lagunas of Utrecht.

With an airman's instinct I guess rather than see that we are approaching the vast stretch of land covered by the city of Amsterdam. Indeed, a heavy fog has enveloped the last lap of Dutch territory between the laguna and the sea over which we have flown, and has almost completely blotted out the landscape, but every now and then a ray of sunshine gleams through the dense mass.

Then suddenly the fog lifts. I look down on the great metropolis—our first halting-place. It is now exactly 11.33 a.m.

The whole squadron follows me in perfect formation. We salute the city by making one grand circular sweep above it. Amsterdam reminds me very much of Venice, not only owing to the huge lagunas that surround it, but also owing to its labyrinth of canals along which the houses are perched, its beautiful squares from which flights of pigeons rise like clouds, its quaintly built bridges and the very tints of the sky that overarches it.

Patient, industrious, wise city, city of clockmakers and philosophers, city of navigators and poets, noble opulent queen of the watery expanses of the Netherlands, we salute thee !

Like a flight of cranes we cut in a straight line across a maze of lakes, lagunas, canals and dykes which has no

parallel in the world. A complicated network of railway lines links together the industrial towns of Northern Holland, of which Amsterdam is the capital. Everywhere we see evidence of the unremitting struggle of man throughout the ages to conquer and direct the course of the waters. There are mighty stretches of fjords that look like lakes, canals that merge into rivers, and rivers that expand into lagoons.

Thousands of faces are turned skywards where the Italian tricolour floats boldly from our planes in the bright sunshine, for the clouds have now vanished. The weather is indeed getting better and better every minute. This spell of calm as we are coming to anchor is so delightful after the tedious hours which we have spent rolling and pitching during our journey across German territory.

We are now flying at a height of 750 feet from the earth, and can see crowds of people swarming into the streets and squares and on the roofs of the houses. Later on we learned that the Dutch were exceedingly flattered by our selection of Amsterdam as our first stop en route for America. The factories, the schools and the civil service and commercial offices extended the lunch interval by a couple of hours in order to give the workers, the pupils and the clerks a chance of taking part in the welcome extended to us.

As we steer towards the landing-stage of Schellingwoude, which is three miles outside the city, the long suburban highway which cuts straight across the huge laguna, is packed with motor-cars, bicycles and all types of vehicles.

The Amsterdam base is in charge of Lieutenant-Colonel Senzadenari, our Air Attaché at Berlin, and consists of a huge basin, bounded on one side by locks and dykes, and on the other by the Dutch aerodrome. The average depth of the Zuider Zee at the spot selected for our alighting is about five and a half feet. From the air it seems a bright pale-green and almost unruffled expanse which reflects the dazzling rays of the sun. Black, white, red and green flags indicate precisely the anchorage for the various planes and give us a clue to the direction and force of the wind.

At 11.40 my machine is the first to land in the stretch of water to the north of the seaward dyke. I turn round abruptly to count the planes in my wake which are circling in the air while waiting to alight at their respective anchorages. Twenty-five! My heart leaps with joy.

The other planes alight at intervals of a few seconds with graceful manœuvres which thrill the vast multitude along the dykes. The dyke near which my machine is moored makes a sharp detour after a little distance, so that I can only see seven or eight planes at anchor: the others have alighted round the bend. But as I have already counted them before their descent, I know that none of them is missing. I must send a message to the Duce at once about our triumph.

On board the boat on which I go ashore are the Italian minister at the Hague, Commander Francesco Maria Taliani, Lieutenant-Colonel Senzadenari and an officer of the Danish navy. On our landing we are greeted first by the town clerk of Amsterdam, Dr. de Vlugt. He is followed by Dr. L. N. Dekers, the Minister of Defence, who after congratulating us on our flight from Italy to Holland and on our successful crossing of the Alps, adds: "We wish you even better luck on the long and difficult flight ahead of you. May God be with you and your men and guide you all safely to America. From the depth of our hearts we wish you a speedy and glorious return to your native land."

I reply briefly while the crowds punctuate my words with wild cheers. I then express a wish to send a telegram immediately to the Duce informing him of our safe arrival. I am shown to a little room alongside. I write my message and request that it should be dispatched at once. As frequently happens through the most inexplicable causes in cases of great emergency, my message was not sent off at once—and, I should add, it was very lucky that it was delayed. It ran thus: "The 25 Atlantic flying-boats have all alighted safely at Amsterdam."

Alas! It was not true! All had alighted safely—except one.

Having written my message, I leave the room and I go

to the great hall of the aerodrome where a vast crowd has gathered. Suddenly an Italian approaches me, and assuming a matter-of-fact tone, says: "Sir, a plane struck the dyke as it was alighting and the bows of its hulls are a little damaged." "Damaged?" I gasp, aghast. I know only too well that if a flying-boat has struck against the dyke, it must have met with disaster, when its great speed in its descent is taken into account. I dash out of the hall without a word of explanation to the generous people who have come to welcome us, and hurry to the place where the accident occurred. It is a difficult job to get there, however. Travelling facilities are extremely slow in Amsterdam. I have to get a motor-boat, return to the dyke, and skirt along the corner towards the side that I did not see when I alighted. As the motor-boat rounds the corner I see a good way off a sight that almost makes my heart stop. A flying-boat has capsized. Its hulls, its planes and its rudder are outlined against the skyline in a manner that leaves no room for doubt. I read the lettering in black on a plane: "I-Dini."

My officers have gathered around the machine. They tell me that three men have been rescued, but that the fourth is still under the water amid the wreckage.

"For how long?" I gasp.

"Half an hour."

Although the hope of rescuing the poor chap is negligible, I beg the Italians and Dutchmen to persist in their gallant efforts to get him out. I do not know who this fourth man is—neither does anybody present. I ask for news about the other three men. Nobody can tell me anything definite. I am informed that a boat fetched them ashore, and that they were at once conveyed to hospital by ambulance.

"But where is this hospital?"

Nobody seems to know, and while I am wondering how I can get in touch with the injured men, I suddenly remember the telegram I sent a few minutes ago. How can I stop it? Or has it already been despatched? I return to the dyke, and Talieni rushes off and succeeds in stopping the telegram just as it is about to be sent.

I decide to go at once to my hotel in order to inquire about the hospital to which my men have been taken. To me in my agitated state it seems an endless journey. There are several locks en route which again and again hold us up. As we proceed the people on both banks cheer wildly, but I am deaf to their applause. I cannot realise that this dreadful disaster has already happened, and just at the moment when we had completed such a successful flight over Europe.

While I am brooding over this terrible anti-climax to our triumph I see von Gronau's four-engine "Dornier" slowly flying round the city and landing. The great German airman has come specially to Amsterdam to greet us. Were it not for the disaster that had befallen us, I would have gone myself to meet him. As that is impossible I send him word that I shall see him later on.

At length we reach the "Albergo Amstel," from where I make inquiries by telephone and learn that each of the injured men has been taken to a different hospital. This means a further delay which seems an eternity. At length, however, I get the facts. Two officers, Captain Baldini and Lieutenant Novelli, and the wireless operator, Quintavale, who was in the tunnel between the two wings, is dead.

I call a meeting of the officers as soon as they have all arrived from the distant landing-stage. It is very difficult even to guess the cause of the accident. It may have been due to a very slight error in manipulating the machine, causing her to strike the water at too steep an angle, or it may have been the result of a piece of wreckage or driftwood striking against one of the floats.

We are all very depressed about the death of Quintavale, a splendid type of youth.

It seems almost incredible to me that such an accident should have happened to Captain Baldini's plane. He is one of our champion pilots, and has an astonishing record of achievements both during and after the war. Aged 34, he is an expert in nautical and geographical science. A flying-boat pilot since 1917, he got three medals for deeds of heroism during the Great War. He

was chosen in 1928 for the voyage on the *Artide* in quest of Amundsen's and Guilbaud's "Latham 47," and for the services he rendered on that occasion, the aeronautical bronze medal for bravery was conferred on him. I shall not and cannot hold him responsible for an accident due to sheer ill luck. We aviators are only all too frequently the victims of the cynical pranks of fate.

I immediately telephone to the Duce the most detailed account of the first stage of our flight and of the tragic happening at Amsterdam.

Naturally the projected festivities are stopped, but we must acknowledge the warm-hearted and generous reception which Amsterdam has prepared for us, although I cannot leave the hotel. In my message of thanks I express our admiration for the magnificent demonstration with which 50 Dutch aeroplanes in massed formation had greeted our arrival.

By a singular coincidence to-day is the twentieth anniversary of the inauguration of the Dutch Air Force. I send greetings to our Dutch brothers and assure them of the admiration and esteem in which they are held by the Italian aviators.

The Amstel Hotel is crowded with callers, one of the very first being Captain von Gronau, who greets me on behalf of the German Air Minister, Herr Goering, and of the German people. In my reply to von Gronau I thank him in the name of my comrades and inform him that in the course of the flight of our squadron over German territory hundreds of wireless stations throughout the Reich sent us messages of greeting. This is, in my view, a striking proof of the interest with which the German people regard our enterprise, I tell him. I add that I answered all these messages so systematically that I sometimes ran the risk of losing contact with the other platoons of my squadron. Luckily, with such a clearly outlined route as the Rhine, constant radio communication with the previous planes was not absolutely essential.

Herr Fokker, the inventor of the famous German fighting plane, also called on me, and was full of enthusiasm regarding our enterprise, and expressed his most fervent wishes for its success.

Lady Drummond Hay, who went round the world on the Graf Zeppelin, and who is here writing up the story of our voyage for an American news agency, is also one of my visitors. Many representatives of the Italian colony in Holland, who have found a comfortable and happy home in this fascinating and hospitable country, also called on me.

Apart altogether from the inevitable depression which the disaster has entailed, I am most anxious to resume our voyage as soon as possible. Immediately after alighting at Amsterdam we took all the necessary fresh supplies aboard, as we shall do at all the subsequent stopping-places. I decide to leave at dawn to-morrow.

Among the guests at dinner at the Hotel Amstel are Captain von Gronau and Lady Drummond Hay. I have a long chat with von Gronau, who is a most ardent advocate of the development of aerial communications between Europe and America, through the medium of flying-boats by the extreme northern route from Iceland to Labrador. He says that our enterprise, the most striking feature of which in his opinion, so far, has been our flight over the Alps, will be a sort of practical proof of the soundness of his theory.

The final weather reports are non-committal. We go to bed early, as we shall have to be up at cock-crow.

CHAPTER IX

THE FLIGHT OVER ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

WE have to accustom ourselves to do with a minimum of sleep during the voyage. The last weather reports which we received during the night made it advisable not to delay our departure from Amsterdam to Londonderry beyond to-day, July 2nd. The first weather report which I receive at dawn confirms me in my view that we must get away as soon as possible. Perhaps we shall not have fine weather during the entire 620 miles that we should cover in four hours and a half if our planes keep up the average speed of 140 miles an hour. It is very important that we should get to Reykjavik—our last halting-place before we take our longest and most difficult flight. If a delay is inevitable through bad weather it will suit us better to be held up in Iceland in order to await a fine day. We have more than a month at our disposal, but we must have an ample margin of time for selecting the most favourable moment for the Atlantic crossing.

Before starting I inquire about our injured comrades of the I-Dini, and learn that they are just suffering from superficial bruises which will take only a few days to heal. And so we can start on our journey without worrying unduly on their account.

At 5 a.m. I leave the hotel for Schellingwoude. The mechanics and the second pilots have already been making all the necessary preparations for departure on their respective machines.

In the foyer of the hotel Colonel Van Reed is waiting for me, and expresses to me on behalf of the Dutch Government his most sincere wishes for our squadron's safe and successful flight to Chicago. I have often heard

that the so-called Nordic phlegm is especially evident in Holland. But the genial cordiality with which this austere-looking man, in the resplendent uniform of the Dutch army, speaks to me, shows how baseless is this contention! And decidedly there is no trace of Nordic phlegm in the wild enthusiasm of the crowd in the street outside, that blocks up the entrance to the hotel, and accompanies us with loud cheers all the way to the landing-stage, despite the earliness of the hour. The citizens of Amsterdam had no sleep last night. All along the beautiful streets, which are expressive of the standard of comfort and good taste in architecture and town-planning of the Dutch people, along the canals which divide the city into two vast semicircles—in a diagonal line from the confluence of the Amstel and the Diemberg right to the Zuider Zee there is one unbroken procession of vehicles of every type.

The police have great difficulty in regulating the traffic of motor-cars, motor-cycles, push-bicycles, carriages and carts converging on the anchorage over the picturesque network of the lagoon. There is only one bridge, half a mile long, linking Amsterdam with Schellingwoude. As this bridge is utterly inadequate to cope with the stream of humanity, steamers and motor-boats are plying busily to and fro. Every available means of locomotion is pressed into service in order not to miss the great spectacle of the twenty-four flying-boats rising from the waters of the Zuider Zee and soaring away towards the nations of the north.

When I reach the landing-stage all the dykes around are literally black with people. The village of Schellingwoude, which looks like a reproduction of an old Flemish painting, is making a gala-day of it.

I say good-bye to the official representatives of the Dutch Government and of the city of Amsterdam, to Lieutenant-Colonel Senzadenari and our friends of the Italian colony, and step into the swift motor-boat which takes me to my plane, where Cagna has everything in readiness for our start. Although the morning is advancing, the sun is still hidden behind the strata of clouds banking up in the east. There is a definite hint of rain in the air, and

the sky has become completely overcast when at length the I-Balb soars over the grey waters. As I ascend, the clouds are less than 300 feet above me. Not a chink of blue sky anywhere. It is just 6-10 a.m.

I make a wide circular gyration to the left while waiting for the rest of the squadron to take off. In order to keep free of the region of the clouds I am forced to fly very low. A faint breeze is blowing from the north. After making a sweep over the southern areas of the city, I return once more to the anchorage and then endeavour to get the squadron to form up in as close formation as possible, as we must make the most of the narrow margin of clear atmosphere beneath the cloud-banks. In twenty minutes all the machines are in line, and I take a straight course over the canal leading to the little town of Ymuiden. There are about twenty miles of land between us and the North Sea, and those twenty miles we must traverse at an altitude of 100 feet. The ground beneath us is dotted with factories whose chimney-stacks loom menacingly up towards us. Still I dare not fly any higher because the sky is getting more and more overcast, and the visibility is very poor. Presently the rain comes down in torrents. At length, at 6.45 a.m., we have passed over Ymuiden, and the North Sea lies before us. I give a sigh of relief. Now we can go ahead with greater confidence since we have left the land behind us, and the plane is, so to speak, soaring over its own element.

The rain keeps on in intermittent showers, with the clouds 150 feet above us, while the maximum visibility is two miles, although at times it is not more than 100 yards. The sea is rough, and there is a north wind blowing at 25 miles an hour. Sometimes the clouds descend to the very water's edge, until grey sea spume and murky drifting mist become fused indistinguishably, and we can only steer our way with the aid of the compass. The wireless operators are kept exceedingly busy. It is not an easy job to keep our planes in line. A mass flight at a height of 150 feet in such conditions of visibility as I have just described demands skilful manipulation by the pilots. Around us is a grey gloomy pall of cloud. The hours seem to drag heavily. It is imperative to keep

one's nerves in control and to keep one's eye on the dashboard all the time. Luckily our engines are working splendidly.

We enquire by wireless from the cities along the English coast and from passing steamers about weather conditions. The replies we get are not reassuring. At 7 a.m. as we are flying through a patch of clear sky we see beneath us a cargo vessel, whose name is indecipherable. At 7.12 another passes. This time we can read the name distinctly—*Harriet*.

Finally, at 8.18 a.m., we sight the English coast on our left. The sky is still considerably overcast. But we are now in a calm zone, and we venture to hope that the weather will improve. Suddenly the clouds seem to be vanishing and to disintegrate into feathery strands. My spirits rise as I give instructions to the platoons to line up in closer formation. At 8.29 a.m. we are crossing Flamborough Head.

A ray of sunshine strikes our planes aslant. A long stretch of coast is visible. Flamborough Head is a promontory with white chalky cliffs, beetling perpendicularly over the sea. After such a lot of cloud and mist it is a positive pleasure to look down on a strip of terra firma. The lighthouse, which our charts describe as a reliable post for furnishing supplies, stands out in the shape of a white tower over 130 feet high on the barren slope of the promontory. Beneath the tower are a dazzling white-washed house, probably used for signalling, and a few squat huts. We leave in our rear Bridlington Bay, which our charts describe as a suitable anchorage for us. However, we feel confident now that the weather along the coast will continue favourable, so that we feel no qualms about giving this anchorage a miss. The coast stretches out, one uniform line, rising just a few yards above the sea-level.

A little further on we encounter a small fleet of fishing vessels ploughing along sluggishly through the calm sea. The fishermen swarm on deck and stare up agape at the twenty-four machines whose engines break the silence of the seas with a strange, reverberant droning noise. They make signals of greeting. As they do so we see at the

same time jets of white steam issuing from seven or eight smoke stacks—apparently the sirens are hooting a shrill welcome to us. We are very much touched by this tribute, but unfortunately we have no means of acknowledging it.

We cannot as yet put too much trust in the weather, which is indeed rather moody again. Every now and then the coastline is completely blotted out by cloud and mist. At 8.40 a.m. conditions of visibility lapse to 400 yards. We are forced once more to proceed in extended formation. And simultaneously I give orders for a gradual increase in altitude; from 150 feet we jump to 300, and so on till we reach 1500. Sometimes we are completely lost behind a kind of nebulous blanket of translucent whitish haze. Luckily the crews keep their nerve wonderfully. There is not the faintest hitch.

The wind has now died down, and our wireless operators intercept meteorological reports which augur more favourable conditions for the rest of our journey. Towards 9 a.m. the English coast is visible. Once more we have an azure sky and waters as calm as a backwash of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Visibility improves more and more as we approach the land with a view to flying over Newcastle. We see the tiny port of Whitby, a town of twelve thousand inhabitants, at the mouth of the River Esk. Numerous fishing-boats are huddled together among the sand dunes of the estuary. This little port was the birthplace of some famous navigators, including Captain Cook, who sailed round the world in 1688 in a small craft which was built at Whitby. Many places in various continents have been named after him. And in the beginning of the eighteenth century Whitby sent forth another famous explorer of the two hemispheres, William Scoresby. The great abbey which towers over the city was restored in the time of Henry VII. The monks of Saint Hilda found a sanctuary in it, and later on it was a famous seat of Benedictine piety.

Now we are crossing over the bay into which the Tees flows. We catch flying glimpses of the pretty hamlets of Loftus, Saltburn and Redcar, and of the town of Middlesbrough, a very important centre for the mining and

export of iron, in which this region abounds. The port is protected by two dykes into which converge in a sort of colossal shell the yellowish waters of the estuary of the river. It is quite possible that this vast stretch of two square miles of water might serve as an emergency anchorage for flying-boats, and yet, as we look down on it, it seems to be very much obstructed by shoals which bank up to the water's edge.

As we proceed, the coastline becomes lower. No more precipitous rocky cliffs towering some 900 feet over the sea, but hills undulating gently to the water's verge, with numerous stretches of beach like those on our Adriatic coast.

And now we are over Sunderland, a city built like all the other English coast towns on the estuary of a river, the Wear, and with a population of 160,000. The first glimpse we get of it through the haze stamps it as a city which owes its existence to the coal industry. In the harbour are many soot-coloured steamers, while all around are mountains of coal for their freightage. The very private dwellings have a sooty appearance. Even the environs of the city look sooty. Next we fly over Newcastle, the metropolis of the coal zone, a city of 300,000 inhabitants on the estuary of the Tyne. This port is one of the main sources of Britain's wealth.

Next we steer towards the Firth of Forth over a range of hills running parallel to a grimy wall, skirting the sea and a little harbour. Twenty miles distant from the mouth of the Tyne is the little island of Coquet, over which we fly. Thirty miles further north is the port of Berwick on the mouth of the river Tweed. This little town of 15,000 inhabitants is surrounded by old fortifications which lend it the atmosphere of a mediæval borough. Its walls were built by Queen Elizabeth, who sent to Italy for architects to plan them. The style of fortification which was then adopted for this little city, served as a model of military architecture for all Europe. The estuary of the river is protected against the fury of the sea on the south by a tongue of land, while on the north is a long mole of stone.

At 9.43 a.m. we pass on our right the little town of

Dunbar at an altitude of some 4,200 feet. In the background are numerous golf courses and tennis courts—a testimony to the popularity among the English of this remote recess of the Firth of Forth as a summer resort.

After passing Dunbar we abandon the coast, and strike across the low promontory at the entrance of the Firth of Forth. The weather is showing signs of improvement as I send out this wireless message: "I am preparing to fly at a greater altitude in order to cross the land. If we find cloudy conditions in Ireland we shall return to this coast where there are numerous anchorages for us in case of emergency." A little later on I shall send out another message: "I am flying over the crag at the entrance to the bay of Edinburgh and I am facing the land. Height 60,000 feet."

A few minutes later, i.e. at 9.55 a.m., we are flying to the right of Edinburgh, the Athens of the north, Sir Walter Scott's city—a city which formed the background for the most romantic legends and the most striking incidents in the history of Scotland. The sky is still somewhat overcast, but the air is sufficiently clear to allow us to gaze with rapture on this splendid scene which is so redolent of Caledonian glamour. With the aid of my chart I enjoy the thrill of identifying the various historical landmarks.

Even before we reach Edinburgh the varied contours of the landscape breathe an atmosphere of legendary glamour. The sea penetrates through the funnel of the Firth of Forth, ever narrowing to the gulf between the two ranges of hills, which are eventually divided only by a narrow strip of water. On every crag and cliff are the ruins of an abbey or a mediæval castle. We see the promontory of St. Abb's Head, a steep mass of barren crags jutting boldly into the sea; we fly over Fast Castle, the scene of the tragic romance of Lucia di Lammermoor; this rugged projection beneath us is probably Wolf's Rock; and it was among these glens and castle-crowned peaks that the heroine of Sir Walter Scott and Donizetti sang and languished. A line from Donizetti—an echo of my young days—rings in my mind, attuned to the rhythmic beat of the engine: "On the wings of the

wind my ardent sighs will be wafted unto you." And near Dunbar, which like a falcon in its eyrie, dominates the little harbour, Cromwell exterminated the Scottish forces in one of the most bloody battles recorded in history. The tragedy of Mary Queen of Scots was staged amidst the frowning eminences beneath us. We are now right over Hailes Castle in which she lived with Bothwell, her third husband. And those crumbling ruins and beetling mountains to our left were the scene of Stevenson's romances. Right ahead of us is Bass Rock Castle, where the Scottish Covenanters and their English brethren were imprisoned during the bloody campaign waged for the love of God during the reign of Charles II, while a little further on is Tantallon Castle, the famous fortress of the Douglasses, the theme of song for so many English and Scottish poets.

And here and there, close to the ruins of castles with their associations of bloodshed and violence, are the crumbling walls of the great mediæval abbeys, eloquent even in their desolation and decay of living faith and eternal hope. The Catholic religion which was brought by St. Columba to the pagan aborigines of these wild mountains from Ireland, the "*Insula sanctorum et doctorum*," expressed itself in a vein of mystic fervour. Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries covered the country, and the anchorites in this remote corner of Nordic earth rivalled those of northern Africa in asceticism and religious rapture. From the superimposition of Ireland's Gaelic culture on that of the aborigines there evolved a curious fusion of heterogeneous elements, and until the time of Cromwell's great crusade the religious outlook of Scotland clashed violently with English creeds.

I cannot see from our present height the famous great Roman wall which Antoninus Pius built in order to mark the extreme northern boundary of the Roman province, and to keep back the hordes of barbarians who were passing on from the north. If the weather were fine it would not be difficult to recognise the great expanse of Birrenswark, where Julius Agricola pitched his tents, and where Antoninus Pius erected the camp for his troops.

Our machines are proceeding at a remarkably high speed. With the aid of the east wind they are doing a good 180 miles an hour. Our flight as we passed over Edinburgh has been too fast to permit us to identify all the historical and legendary landmarks of that city. We have merely had an impressionist glance at it.

It has taken us barely forty minutes to fly across Scotland. At 9.55 we had Edinburgh on our right, at 10.56 we were flying over the western coast near Heads of Ayr, all the time keeping up a steady altitude of 6000 feet. Unfortunately, as we are about to pursue our flight further westward, weather conditions become bad again. A dense bank of cloud beneath us, and numerous scattered strands of mist blur the landscape. It becomes more and more difficult to keep our course, and we must once more depend on our nautical instruments to get our bearings. Through the murk we guess rather than see the estuary of the Firth of Forth, and are now crossing the little neck of land that joins the Forth with the Clyde.

On our right is the Estuary of the Clyde on which stands Glasgow, the second most populous city in great Britain and one of the largest ports in the world. Glasgow itself is so enveloped in cloud that we cannot see it.

CHAPTER X

THE AIR ARMADA IN IRELAND

THE fog spreads like a river overflowing its banks. It becomes denser and denser as we go on, and seems, so to speak, glued to the earth, and shuts out the western coast of Scotland completely from our view. On the other hand, the sky above us is clear and calm.

We cannot distinguish sea from land. We just see a maze of big and small peaks islanded like an archipelago in the vast sea of mist. They are the steep crags of Goat Fell in the Isle of Arran, of Tuirc in the Island of Cantyre, the humpy eminences of the Cumbrian Islands, and the ridges of Holy Island. And then the lofty summits of Rathlin Island, whose contours are suggestive of a grapnel, stand out amid the haze as if suspended in mid-air.

The sea of fog stretches away right to the Irish coast, where in lone and savage grandeur a weird promontory that looks like the abode of a giant cave-dweller emerges boldly from the mist. The Irish call it "Giant's Causeway."

An English steamer, packed with representatives of the Italian colony in Glasgow, has been held up for six hours by the fog at the mouth of the Clyde. As the hours roll on their hopes of seeing us alight on Irish waters become more and more slender. The vessel cannot budge an inch. However, Italians are not the people to break down under adverse circumstances. They send us a wireless message full of enthusiasm and admiration for our enterprise. I reply with equal cordiality.

I am beginning to feel anxious about the question of anchorage in Ireland. It is now 10.45 a.m. In half an

hour we shall be flying over Londonderry. I swerve a little southwards and succeed in approaching Belfast Lough, which I find unencumbered by shipping, and therefore an ideal emergency anchorage, should we have any difficulty in alighting at Londonderry. At 10.55 a.m. I send a wireless message to all the planes: "Take a good look at Belfast Lough which is on our left. If there is a fog at Londonderry, we shall return and alight on Belfast Lough."

But it will not be necessary to return to Belfast Lough for the sky quite suddenly becomes clear as we approach our goal. There is not the faintest trace of fog. We start preparing for our descent, as we pass through the entrance to Lough Foyle, the great funnel-shaped bay, at whose base is the city of Londonderry.

As we enter Lough Foyle we pass through scenery reminiscent of the Dardanelles. On one side of it is Innishowen Head, on the other is Cape Magilligan—two headlands which come so near meeting that from a distance they seem to block the entrance to the bay.

The bay is ten miles long and four miles wide, and its soundings are very deep, although viewed from the air, it has numerous sandbars. A channel fourteen feet deep along the western shore is navigable for steamers right up to Londonderry. A long row of piles, like those in the lagunas of Venice, marks its course.

The anchorage for our planes is in the south-western corner of the bay between Culmore Point and Crummin Point, about four and a half miles from Londonderry.

I send a final message to the squadron: "I am preparing to descend. Be careful to alight platoon after platoon, and to keep a very sharp look-out. Afterwards you are to refuel immediately. I want to leave tomorrow for Reykjavik. Only the first pilots are to disembark in order to make their reports."

It was indeed my intention at the time to leave next day. I shall presently explain why I could not do so.

Before alighting we salute the beautiful sun-kissed Irish city by flying round it twice in mass formation. It is now 11.15 a.m. We have taken five hours and nineteen minutes to cover 550 standard miles of theoretical

course. The aerial course covered has been 715 miles at an average speed of 135 miles an hour.

A platoon of five British aeroplanes has come to meet us, and escorts us as we proceed up the bay and in our flight over the city. At 11.34 a.m. my machine is already moored to its buoy, while the other twenty-three alight on the water in rapid succession.

The elegant manœuvres of the Italian squadron arouse tremendous enthusiasm among the immense warm-hearted Irish crowd that has come to meet us. An endless flotilla of vessels of every type, all packed to full capacity with people cheering themselves hoarse, surrounds us as Captain Bertoli, commandant of our Londonderry base, comes alongside my plane in a motor-boat to fetch me ashore.

On landing we are welcomed with all the honours by the British authorities, while a band plays Italian and Irish national airs.

Air-Marshal Clark-Hall greets us cordially on behalf of Lord Londonderry, the British Air Minister. We are also welcomed by the Right Honourable Milne Barbour, the Minister for Industry for Northern Ireland, who came specially from Belfast to meet us, and by the mayor of Londonderry and other leading people of that city. The air, military and naval attachés of the Italian Embassy in London are among the many representatives on the landing-stage.

After reviewing a company of soldiers, who receive me with military honours, I proceed with my officers to the Guildhall of Londonderry. The streets through which we pass are lined on both sides with cheering crowds. The city is gaily-adorned with Italian, Irish and British flags, and carillons resound from all the church steeples. Among those who welcome us at Londonderry are a number of young men and women attired in the traditional Irish costume.

At the entrance to the Guildhall I review the Second Leinster Regiment, who present arms on my arrival.

The spontaneous demonstration of enthusiasm which greets us on all sides touches us profoundly. We see in it a revelation of the generous impressionability of the

Irish—a characteristic which they have in common with the Latins.

I enter the Guildhall, a fine modern Gothic building which overlooks the beautiful promenade along the banks of the Foyle. The Mayor of the City, dressed in his robes of office, delivers an address of welcome, to which I reply in terms of grateful appreciation.

When we leave the Guildhall to go to Villa Troy, where quarters have been prepared for myself and my staff, we find it no easy matter to make headway through the dense crowds who continue to applaud us with frenzied enthusiasm.

As soon as I reach Villa Troy I request to be put in immediate telephonic communication with Rome. I am anxious to let the Duce hear from my own lips my account of our progress so far. After a few minutes I get in touch with him, and give him a detailed account of our flight through fog and cloud, of our journey across Scotland and our successful anchorage at Londonderry. I add that the behaviour of our crews is magnificent and that we have just received a most enthusiastic welcome from the Irish people. In conclusion, I tell him that I feel quite sanguine that we shall reach our destination at Chicago without a hitch.

The Duce replies in terms of enthusiastic appreciation of myself and asks me to convey his warm congratulations to the crews. He then enquires about the time fixed for the resumption of our flight. I reply that, weather permitting, we shall leave for Reykjavik to-morrow at dawn.

As a matter of fact, we had barely alighted when our motormen and our base staff endeavoured to start refuelling operations at once, through the medium of the oil-tanks which they had prepared in advance. Unfortunately it is Sunday—an Anglo-Saxon Sunday. It is utterly impossible to secure men to do the job.

Well, there is nothing for it but to wait. I am rather dumbfounded, as I am afraid that the weather may change on our way to Reykjavik. However, worrying won't mend matters.

In the afternoon we have an agreeable surprise. The

Italian Minister of Finance, Signor Guido Jung, who had left the World Economic Conference for a couple of days to greet us, and the Italian Ambassador in London, Signor Dino Grandi, my old comrade, have arrived by aeroplane from London. I am delighted to see them, give them an account of our voyage so far, and introduce my officers to them. We spend the whole afternoon with them.

We propose to start on the following morning at dawn, to stop at an anchorage at the end of every day, and thereby reach Chicago within a week. But unfavourable weather forecasts force us to abandon our intention, and to wait for yet another day. There is no alternative. If it were a question just of a single plane we would not be such absolute slaves of meteorological conditions. Whenever I give orders for the postponement of a flight, I read an expression of disappointment on the faces of my comrades. Every one of my pilots feels quite confident of reaching his goal if I only give the order to start. Yes, and so might I, if I were alone. But now it is a question of a mass flight, there are 24 planes and 115 men, for whose safety their leader is responsible. And their leader might be pardoned if he felt slightly envious of those 25 pilots, who have no responsibility beyond obeying instructions without discussing them. A man placed in charge of a squadron has to display a cautiousness that seems to detract from the heroic glamour of an aerial adventure. I have promised the Duce, I have promised my country, and I have promised myself that I would show such cautiousness. And I intend to keep my word. I shall not expose my men and my machines to futile risks. Our tour is a demonstration of Italy's military power—it is a kind of spectacular display of Italy's Air Force. It is not a mere speed test. The feat we aim at is to lead the entire squadron intact from Rome to America and back to Rome again.

I explain all this at the meeting to which the crews of the squadron are summoned on the morning of July 3rd, in the garden of Villa Troy, after having decided to postpone our departure for yet another day. I add that if the weather forecasts prove more hopeful we shall be

able to leave this very day at one p.m., because the Polar day that awaits us in Iceland will permit us to alight at any hour.

However, even the idea of this provisional time of departure had to be given up a little later.

Well, meanwhile our pilots are seeing just a little more of the world. Incidentally, it is one of the aims of our tour that they should observe as much as possible of the physical, environmental and cultural characteristics of the many nations through which they are passing. At the end of our voyage we shall have flown over Italy, Switzerland, a corner of France, Germany, Holland, England, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, Labrador, Canada, the United States, Newfoundland, Ireland once more, and France, or alternatively the Azores and Portugal. A good quarter of the world's surface, embracing territories of the old and the new world. Our men will have gained a spiritual heritage which they will never lose; they will contribute towards the linking up of little Italy with the great nations beyond the barriers of the Alps. They will give an idea of Italian culture, Italian progress and Italian ideals to people who regard Italy as a nation of macaroni-eaters and mandoline-players, a nation of knife-grinders, ice-cream vendors and barrel-organ players. Why should we despair? Let us make profitable use of our day of enforced rest.

My boys do not stand in need of introductions. They soon make hosts of friends in strange countries. All Italians have the gift of comradeship—they are “good mixers.” And my comrades literally radiate sociability and goodfellowship.

And then there is a strong streak of Latin temperament in the gay, impulsive and kind-hearted people of Ireland. They are in the main Celts, whose ancestors all spoke Irish some two hundred years back. They have remarkably bright eyes, especially the girls. They are mostly dark-haired, though I have seen a considerable number of them with red hair. I instinctively sense that in the veins of these islanders, who are really only islanders geographically, a blood flows that is as restless as the waves of the wild ocean that beats on their shores, a

craving to forge the links of friendship with their continental brethren, a definite urge towards human sociability.

I have spoken of the remarkably bright, soft eyes of the Irish girls ; I have only to add that they have set aflame the heart of many a poor Italian pilot during our stay in this enchanting isle.

The city is bathed in sunshine. It is built on seven hills like Rome, and has a sort of acropolis in its very heart—the ancient city of Derry, which is surrounded by walls and bastions erected many centuries ago—walls that were more than once the last bulwark of Irish civilisation—walls that were stormed by the Normans and the English in the fierce wars waged centuries ago. “No surrender,” is the proud motto of the city ; it was the reply of the sturdy burghers to General Hamilton when he besieged Derry for 105 days, from December 7th, 1688, to August 12th, 1689, in the name of James II of England. Hunger, pestilence and even treachery on the part of some of their own townsmen did not break the spirit of the Irish, who were inflamed by the apostolic frenzy of a sort of Presbyterian Savonarola, Pastor George Walker.

This nation of warriors and mystics is divided into two religious camps. On one side are the doughty, unyielding worshippers of the rigorous Nonconformist deity of Ulster—“the god of battles,” the god who says “vengeance is mine and I will repay”—on the other are the votaries of the Son of Mary, the gentle and loving Christ of Catholic Ireland—the Incarnate Son of Man.

I proceed, first of all, to lay a wreath of flowers on the monument of the victims of the Great War, which is in the Diamond, a square in the very heart of the old city. We enter the ancient walls by Ship Quay Gate, which leads to the harbour, and we pass along the beautiful broad street leading to the top of the hill, and go down the other slope to Bishop’s Gate, a sort of triumphal arch which was superimposed on the ancient gate in 1879. The monument in the Diamond commands a view of the city and the whole surrounding country—obelisks, towers, churches, hills and harbour.

After I place the flowers on the memorial to the victims of the Great War, I have the pleasure of a visit at Villa Troy from the Most Reverend Dr. O'Kane, the Catholic Bishop of Derry, who expresses most fervent wishes for the success of our voyage. I send for my officers, who are scattered all over the building, and introduce them to him individually. The bishop expresses his deep affection and admiration for the Italian race, and adds that as the pastor of a Roman Catholic flock, it is only natural that he should love the great nation of which Rome is the capital. We are deeply touched by his words. Indeed his address was one of the many cordial expressions of welcome which has made us feel at home in this hospitable city.

The first day of our arrival in Ireland is spent amid the historic spots in and around Londonderry. The heat becomes more intense in the afternoon. The weather in Ireland is splendid—better than the weather in Italy at present. Our crews, after having seen all the sights in the city, dive into the sea from their planes, and afterwards stretch themselves on the wings for a sun-bath.

There has been a slight accident at our anchorage. While refuelling operations were going on yesterday at Colmore Point, the sharp prow of one of the boats struck one of the wings of the S 55, which was scarcely one yard above the water's level. A rather strong breeze was blowing at the time, and the collision with my machine was an accident that could not have been avoided. And immediately afterwards another plane met with a similar accident. Luckily the damage was not serious in either case, and merely entailed a couple of hours' work.

In the evening we take a motor run through the out-lying country. The landscape is exceedingly beautiful and varied—green undulating hills interlaced here and there by the River Foyle, the estuary and the calm waters of little inlets of the sea; and in the background the wild blue mountains of Donegal.

In the course of our run we penetrated into the Irish Free State, whose frontier up here encircles the state of Northern Ireland in a concave line.

When, after a bitter guerilla warfare lasting over two years, the fight between England and Ireland, which had been going on for centuries, was ended in 1921 by the creation of an independent state, called the Irish Free State, Northern Ireland, an area of less than one-fourth of the entire surface of the country, was formed into a separate state with its own governor and its own parliament, which was absolutely distinct from and independent of the Dublin parliament. Northern Ireland is sometimes loosely termed Ulster, but this is a misnomer, as three of the nine counties of Ulster are attached to the Irish Free State. The religious antipathy between Catholics and Protestants which was responsible for the partition of the country, has been gradually waning in intensity during recent years, though it is by no means extinct as yet.

The frontier is guarded by a customs officer. I have neither a passport nor a special permit to enter the Irish Free State territory. However, the customs officer, with a courteous smile, tells me that he will allow my officers and myself to cross the frontier, provided I give him my autograph. I gladly comply with his terms. By this time we have all had a fair amount of practice in autograph-signing—a rather tedious job when repeated interminably. It is not that we are unwilling to give such a little memento to those who honour us by asking for it; it is the monotony of the act that becomes tiresome. Here in Ireland the people are very keen on getting our autographs. My officers are practically taken by assault wherever they show themselves—the autograph-hunters waylay them everywhere—in the streets, in restaurants, on staircases, etc. It is a foretaste of what is in store for us in America, where we will be assailed even in our bathrooms and bedrooms by mobs brandishing autograph-books and fountain-pens!

On the day after my little incursion into the Irish Free State, I receive a most cordial telegram of welcome from President De Valera, to which I reply in terms of equal cordiality.

On the evening of July 3rd I am agreeably surprised by a visit from Lord Londonderry, the British Secretary

of State for Air, who has luncheon with us, and invites me to spend a few hours in his beautiful mansion near Belfast, where he is staying for the summer. I promise to pay him a visit the following day, should weather conditions not permit me to set off for Reykjavik.

Unfortunately the weather reports and forecasts which we received during the night are not favourable. An area of depression has spread over Greenland and the barometer has dropped in Iceland. To start such a long flight under such conditions would be both difficult and dangerous. And so we have to put off our departure until July 5th.

My friends Grandi and Jung hoped to be present when we took off, but Jung has to leave for London by aeroplane to attend the afternoon session on July 4th, at which apparently it will be decided whether the World Economic Conference is to go on or to wind up, as a result of the unexpected message from Roosevelt. And Grandi has to go to Dublin to see the Italian consul in that city. And so I say adieu to my two friends. Perhaps we shall have finished our tour to America and back before the London Conference has arrived at a decision!

Next day after reading the weather reports, which still continue to be adverse, I fly with Pellegrini and Cagna to Mount Stewart in County Down on the eastern coast of Ireland, to visit Lord Londonderry in accordance with my promise.

The British Air Ministry has sent six large triple-engined seaplanes to greet us on our arrival in Ireland. They are anchored in front of the city, and immediately after we had alighted I paid them a visit of inspection. Two of them are now chosen to fetch us to Lord Londonderry's country seat. I go aboard one of them and Cagna and Pellegrini take their seats in the other. The planes are barely in the air when I observe with astonishment that all aboard, pilots as well as mechanics, are smoking. I am aware that on the large English aeroplanes the petrol tanks are all on the wings. Consequently there is no risk of fire or explosion, but when I am offered a cigarette, I instinctively refuse it, as if I were asked to commit a sacrilege. And yet, heaven

knows, I am dying to smoke that cigarette. We Italians are always obsessed by the fear of an outbreak of fire on our planes. I suddenly recall my amusement at Jung's description of the clever manner in which during his flight from London, the mechanics on board had made tea for him on a petrol-stove. Our phlegmatic minister was not at all scared on that occasion, although it struck him as exceedingly strange. In many respects he has the stoical Anglo-Saxon outlook, as his remark showed : " Well, if it is my fate to die on an English aeroplane, on an English aeroplane I shall die ? "

Lord Londonderry is the ideal English aristocrat, with a tall, lithe figure, a perfectly moulded face and a remarkably youthful appearance. His eyes, clear as crystal, look fixedly at the person to whom he is speaking. There is in his expression, speech and bearing, a touch of that sangfroid, that blasé *distrain* hauteur and that careless elegance, which are peculiar characteristics of England's nobility, who loathe as the essence of vulgarity, any loudness in speech as well as dress and any ostentatious display of ultra-cleverness.

I really have a decided liking for Englishmen of good stock. From experience I have learned that it is quite easy to make allowances for their insular egotism, about which, incidentally, so many unfair comments and malicious fables have been woven. In fact, I am not sure if their insular egotism is not easier to put up with than our so much vaunted Latin camaraderie. It is just a matter of getting to know the well-bred Englishman, and of him getting to know you. And remember that when he does get to like you, he will be eager to place you on the same altar on which, with a delightful candour and naiveté, he worships himself, as the most perfect product of the Creator's hands.

I had frequently before spent some time in the company of Lord Londonderry. The last occasion was during the Disarmament Conference. He is a very impressive and interesting conversationalist, a man of very wide experience and knowledge of the world and a broad-minded politician.

His summer residence is to the south of Belfast on the

little peninsula of Ard, which juts seawards like a finger indicating the nearest point of the British coast.

It is a distance of about 94 miles, as the crow flies, from Londonderry to Mount Stewart. Air-Marshal Clark-Hall also accompanies me on the trip. After flying over a beautiful varied countryside we cross Lough Neagh, a huge rectangular lake, and leaving Belfast on our left, we alight in the gulf which forms, so to speak, the armpit of the peninsula near Newtownards, a town which, despite its name, is extremely ancient. The tombs of all the marquesses of Londonderry of bygone days are in the Newtownards cathedral, and there is a magnificent monumental column erected to the memory of the fifth marquess of the line, which includes many famous soldiers and statesmen.

A few hundred yards off is Mount Stewart, nestling in a beautiful park which sweeps down in graceful undulations towards the sea. The ancestral home of the Londonderry family is a magnificent building in the neo-classical style of the seventeenth century. In the shady walks around it one gets a glimpse of the virgin forest—an ideal abode for woodland nymphs or for the Celtic druids, a forest pungent with fragrant moss and lichens, and full of venerable oaks around which the ivy and mistletoe cling in eternal embrace. The public have admittance to the park once a week, in accordance with an old-time concession made by the first Marquess of Londonderry.

Lord Londonderry cordially welcomes us and shows us all over his beautiful domain, which is rich in legendary and historical associations. One of the first things which rivets my attention is a flower-bed which is a mass of red blooms, made in the shape of an enormous hand with its fingers outspread. Lord Londonderry tells me that this floral representation of a gory hand symbolises an ancient Irish legend. I do not claim to give a verbatim rendering of the story as told to me by Lord Londonderry, as he speaks French with an Oxford accent, while mine is an infamous Italian parody of Parisian pronunciation. However, this is the gist of the legend. In the Middle Ages one of the numerous marauding British chiefs who raided those shores tried to effect a landing at Mount Stewart.

Having been repelled, however, by the natives, he cut off one of his hands, and cast it on the shore as a symbol that he was taking possession of the place.

Our conversation drifts to aerial feats both old and new and thence to forecast of the limitless possibilities of civil aviation for bringing the nations into more rapid communication with one another. Then we spend some hours chatting about our recollections of the Great War and about our travelling and sporting adventures. He is especially impressed by the scope of our mass flight. When we part, I feel that we are even greater friends than we were before.

It is late in the evening when we leave Mount Stewart. Darkness is drawing on, but there is a brilliant moon, and as we motor to Londonderry via Belfast we are fascinated by the beauty of the moonlit landscape. The soft contours of hills and valleys, of dim woodlands and shaggy ruins silvered by the July moon, recall to my mind a host of romantic passages from Sir Walter Scott.

CHAPTER XI

PERILS OF THE FLIGHT TO ICELAND

WE spend one night more in Londonderry, with our minds made up to leave in the morning. The weather reports announce somewhat improved conditions all along the route. They forecast for certain a lifting of the pressure on the Irish coast and a deepening of the depression, but add that the low pressure which had descended upon the north-west of Greenland for some days still persists there.

These conditions are not exactly ideal, it is true, for facing a flight of 937 miles and all over the ocean. But we fear that later we may be definitely held up at the Iceland base if we do not start at once. It is of vital importance in the case of an expedition like ours to avail ourselves immediately of fine weather and not to hang on waiting for it to get better.

At 10 a.m. I order the crews to embark. At 10.30 the 110 men are aboard their planes.

Our farewells to the Londonderry people are very touching. Some of our boys have been badly smitten by the Irish girls, and carry tender memories of them towards the frozen seas of the north. Indeed we all hate to leave this enchanting isle, but like the knights of the Holy Grail, we cannot tarry. We must follow our quest.

I am the last to go aboard the motor-boat. I bid adieu on behalf of all my comrades to our charming hosts as the boat forges ahead towards the anchorage. The weather is fine, but we have a premonition of conditions on the way from Londonderry to Reykjavik that will test our nerves. I smoke my last cigarette on my way to my flying-boat.

At 11.42 a.m. I give the signal for starting, and to the

accompaniment of the roar of the forty-eight engines of the squadron, which the wooded banks of the Foyle re-echo, my plane dashes forward and cuts through the water, leaving a long seething line of white foam in its wake. Then it takes an abrupt leap out of the water. We soar into the air and, making a wide detour to the left of the Foyle, fly in broad circles round the city with the two other planes of our platoon on our right and left respectively. We slacken speed so as to allow the other platoons to line up behind us. They are under way in less than ten minutes, each in the form of a perfect isosceles triangle, taking their respective positions with the symmetrical clockwork precision of squads of infantry on a barrack square. My machine then forges ahead straight in the direction of the north-west, where far away beyond the horizon lies hidden Iceland, the springboard from which we shall leap towards the new world.

I send a wireless farewell greeting to the city of Londonderry. Memories of the happy days we spent there will linger forever in our hearts.

At 12.2 p.m. I fly over the lighthouse at the mouth of the Foyle, and swing to the left. At 12.10, still keeping to the left, I pass by Malin Head, the most northerly peak of Ireland, and head for the broad ocean. The sea is a little choppy with an ebb tide and a slight north wind. The sky is for the most part overcast with cirrus clouds.

Taking everything into consideration, the conditions are ideal during the first two hours of our flight. The beautiful Irish sun frequently breaks through the clouds, and follows us with a kindly smile. A moderate wind blows from the south-east wafting our machines in record time towards the north. All our boys are in the highest spirits. The stretch of sea around the Hebrides does not belie its reputation for protracted spells of calm during the months of June and July. Well, perhaps the meteorologists have erred in their forecast regarding the rest of our route.

I turn round. The whole squadron is following in my wake in perfect formation. It is a most beautiful sight, which fills me with pride and touches me very deeply.

Scarcely does a wing lift towards the left, when the right wing with a graceful swerve brings the plane immediately into a horizontal position again. Swaying gently in the air, our squadron floats onward with a poise that has the rhythm of poetry in it. And beneath us is an azure, smooth, motionless sea.

At 12.24 we are flying over two fishing vessels, which greet us with siren blasts, while feathery jets of white steam shoot up from their funnels. At 12.35 we observe a ship on our right. Our engines accelerate from 1600 to 1650 revolutions. We are flying at a height of 300 feet.

But the illusion could not last. I have already mentioned about our premonition—a premonition destined to prove correct.

At 2 p.m. I see a few miles ahead of us a sort of yellow streak along the horizon. At first it looks like a haze. But presently we realise that we are in for something far worse. It is the fog—the dreaded fog of the northern seas.

I have barely time to scribble a radio message in my memorandum book, which I send to all my planes to get into extended formation. I descend to within ninety feet of the water, and note the long heavy rollers beneath me. Luckily we are wafted by a light and favourable wind. We drive right ahead through the fog for about half an hour.

His first encounter with fog always produces the same effect on an airman—it sends his heart into his mouth. We all know that we cannot dodge it, and we know the perils that it entails. The most imperceptible pinking of a plane may send it into the water. The difficulty of maintaining a definite altitude is considerable when one is flying so low, owing to the variations in pressure which are automatically registered by the altimeter. When there is such variation of pressure, the altimeter may register 150 feet when you are only thirty feet above the sea. On the other hand if you climb in order to get out of the zone of mist, you run the risk of ramming another plane or of having your own rammed.

I strain my eyes in my endeavour to probe the fog. I look downwards again and again, and strive to gauge

how far above the sea I am. I am ready at the first glimpse of water to climb at once.

The flight goes on thus for thirty minutes, which seem an eternity, but apart from the nervous strain which we endure we have no very serious difficulties. The temperature is high, so that there is no danger of layers of ice forming on the wings of our planes.

At 3.30 p.m. conditions improve somewhat. The horizon is still curtained with fog, but we can see half a mile ahead of us. I send a wireless message to the squadron stating that I am emerging from the fog. The I-Bise, which has been scouting for us, and has climbed to something between 2000 and 3000 feet, falls into line again. Then quite suddenly the weather changes and once more for the worse. The sea has turned very rough, a strong west-south-west wind is blowing; the sky is getting darker and darker, and towards the horizon it merges indistinguishably with the sea. Heavy showers fall. We are now flying with a few yards between plane and plane, but I give orders once more to proceed in extended formation. We can see the surface of the sea at one moment, at the next it is blotted out. We spend another half-hour thus. We are now going through a terrible nerve-racking ordeal. The mere muscular strain is awful. My eyes ache. Sometimes we seem to be skimming the surface of the water.

Cagna has his eyes riveted on the instruments, and our conversation is limited to gestures. Normally glowing with ruddy health, his face is now cadaverous and tense. Still we do not lose our heads. I send a message to the pilots to climb in quest of a calmer and clearer layer. I find another gap in the dense enveloping pall—the next minute I am buried in the fog which broods over the higher belt to which I have climbed. And then, quite suddenly, to my ineffable delight I see a clear sky once more! I send a message to my companions that we have emerged from the white inferno. The visibility is now splendid, and we fly along feeling a great sense of relief, for all that the wind is still pretty rough and the temperature is falling steadily.

The blanket of fog is now left behind, but a raging sea

is boiling beneath us. Woe to the plane that would venture to alight! Still the wind astern helps us along. There is not a trace of a sail—not a puff of smoke along the livid horizon. A wild waste of whirling grey waters which recalls the stretch of the Tyrrhenian Sea near Leghorn when it is lashed to fury by the south-western gales at their worst. The waves of a dead sea voicing their hate of the living! After a while I observe that the rain has changed into a driving storm of fine snow. It is just 4.49 p.m. as we accelerate our engines to 1445 revolutions.

The first glimpse of land far away in the distance! The islands of Vestmanæjar—a little group of barren crags, one of which towers 900 feet over the waves. The coast of Iceland is not very far off now. Our course swings to the left towards the peninsular of Reykjanes. Then all of a sudden we see a snow-capped rocky eminence. I am just about to fly over it when hundreds of sea-gulls soar skywards from its craggy slopes. The snow has vanished, and I see nothing but black and menacing rocks.

We have now to cut across the peninsula, a stretch of between twenty and twenty-five miles before we alight in the bay of Reykjavik. The coast along here offers us no sanctuary. It is impossible to discern the outline of the mountains which slope up from the water's edge, with a view to flying over them and following up our route towards the snow-clad volcanic table-lands of the interior. Cagna agrees with me that it would be far safer than facing those invisible mountain ridges to fly along the coast, and to travel round the promontory from Reykjanes to Cape Utskalon, even though it would mean adding some twenty minutes extra to our journey.

At 5.20 p.m. we are at the estuary of the Olfusa. We skim along the coast to the left, and at 5.25 we are flying over Selvogrues. The rain is coming down in buckets. At 5.45 we are over Osar, and at 5.48 we catch our first glimpse of Reykjavik, with its bay hidden by low-lying clouds.

We find it necessary still to hug the coast in order to get a better idea of the lie of the city. Even now we have

not succeeded in discerning the outline of the mountains which protect Reykjavik in the rear, but we see the tower of the only Catholic church in the city, while the terrace overlooking it is black with people. There are some ships in the harbour, and the shrill whistle of sirens greets our ears.

At last I pick out our anchorage, and I descend in the teeth of a strong head-wind which acts as a brake and steadies my plane as I glide downwards. It is exactly 6 p.m. We have travelled 955 miles in six hours and eighteen minutes at an average rate of 152 miles an hour—a record speed. Our theoretical route was 895 miles.

But it is just when we touch the surface of the water that we get into difficulties. We cannot moor to the buoy with the wind against us. So we set the engine going again, and as the plane will not swing round, we improvise sails by hoisting our cloaks on the edge of one of the wings. The flying-boat, converted into a sailing vessel by this unique equipment, tacks and comes round within the range of the buoy. It is a quaint and rather original manipulation of a flying-boat, which it takes us forty minutes to execute. It is only when my machine is anchored with its flag floating to the wind that I realise I am frozen.

A boat approaches. I recognise my old friend, Captain Altomare, the commandant of the base. By his side in the boat is a rubicund, phlegmatic, impassive-looking individual in the uniform of the diplomatic service—magnificent peaked cap, sword and resplendent cloak—Councillor Tommasi of the Italian Embassy.

We exchange greetings. Despite the rather sharp nip of this sub-polar climate, we are in the best of spirits as we disembark. Among the other island dignitaries who greet me as I step ashore is the youthful Prime Minister, with his wife and their little baby girl, who reminds me of my little fair-haired Valeria in distant Italy. The little girl advances towards me with a most exquisite gesture and presents me with a bouquet of flowers. Iceland flowers! What a delightful gift!

There are also some Italian and foreign journalists on

the landing-stage. I have barely stepped ashore when an English woman journalist accosts me.

"What will be the itinerary of your next mass flight?"

"We must wait, my dear lady, until we have finished this one," I answered with a smile. "Then, we shall see."

Suddenly I notice a huge hangar. I am informed that it was erected by the Germans a few years ago to accommodate the aeroplanes that were to be used for a regular service around the island. A limited liability company was formed, which, as might be expected, went bankrupt.

We cannot refuel our machines to-day as the sea is too rough. We must wait until to-morrow. I give the order to the crews to disembark, after which we proceed first along a steep little street and afterwards by a broader one, towards the city which is about a quarter of a mile away.

Reykjavik gives us a tremendous ovation. Its beautiful streets with their elegant wooden houses are gaily festooned and adorned with flags.

Enormous crowds of jubilant people swarm around us. We cannot understand a word of what they say, but their eyes and their gestures are eloquent of a hospitable welcome and admiration.

A long line of motor-cars accompanies us right through the city to the Hotel Borg. On Austur Square the enthusiastic welcome extended to us by the people of Iceland reaches its climax. Before taking his departure, the Prime Minister calls for cheers for Italy, to which the crowd responds with vociferous applause. The cheering continues for a long time after we have entered the hotel.

The Hotel Borg is not a big one, but it is built in accordance with all the principles of modern comfort, and it has that peculiar grace of outline which is typical of all Iceland houses. On entering our suite of rooms we are very agreeably surprised at the elegance of the furniture and fittings.

Immediately after my entrance into my rooms several leading islanders and foreigners call on me. After exchanging a few words with the Italian journalists I draw up my report to the Duce. I inform him that I found

the crews thoroughly satisfactory during the course of the long and difficult flight from Londonderry, and I assure him of my gratitude for the untiring interest which he takes in us. I add that the inspiration of his outstanding personality is ever before our eyes and will lead us to victory. In conclusion I state that, to judge by the meteorological forecasts for the next few days, we are likely to be held up in Reykjavik for some time.

And now at length the time for our well-earned rest has come. We are all somewhat tired. I am the first to retire.

I find, however, that it is not an easy matter to fall asleep on my first night in this hyperborean clime, where the solar light continues for days on end at this time of the year. To make matters worse, there are no shutters attached to the windows of the hotel, and the curtains are of a flimsy blue material which radiates an azure-tinted daylight glow. After several abortive efforts to woo sleep, I suddenly hit upon a scheme for producing at least semi-darkness in my room. I hang a bedspread from the corners of the window, and stop as best I can every chink through which the light filters. In this way I succeed in producing a twilight effect in my room. I throw myself upon the bed, and await the approach of dusk, which comes at midnight, and is followed exactly a minute afterwards by the new dawn. A refreshing sleep at length comes to my relief.

CHAPTER XII

A GAY TIME IN ICELAND

NEXT morning I hold a meeting of my general staff, and we discuss the unfavourable weather reports which I receive from Professor Baumann, who has his receiving and transmitting office at Julianshaab, in Greenland. Afterwards I take a stroll through the streets of the city, in the principal square of which is Government House. It could not be called a palatial mansion, but it is conspicuous owing to its simple and graceful harmony of design. The island is an independent state, which has nothing in common with Denmark save allegiance to the same monarch and a similar foreign policy. The Government consists of three Ministries, i.e. the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Finance.

The Iceland Parliament comprises 142 deputies, and holds its sessions on the second floor of the University which is in the same square as Government House. It is called the Athling, and is the oldest of the parliamentary institutions now in existence in the whole world. It was founded in A.D. 931, and celebrated its first millenium a few years ago. An Italian delegation headed by the vice-president of our Chamber of Deputies, the Honourable Fausto Bianchi, took part in the festivities on that occasion. The Iceland deputies are shrewd fellows. As a rule they meet only once a year, and they do not seem to give their Government a great deal of trouble. Until the year 1798 they used to hold summer sessions in the open air in idyllic surroundings at Pingvellir.

Also on Austur Volluv Square we see the elegant Lutheran church of stone and brick, whose foundation stone was laid in 1700. Its façade was completed in 1847.

It has a beautiful portico in Romanesque style, and tall slim windows with their arches built on one curve. The Iceland coat of arms, a silver falcon on an azure field, stands out in bold relief above the belfry. The memory of Iceland's greatest poet, Hallgrímur Pjetursson, whose name, I regret to say, I have only heard for the first time just now, is perpetuated by an obelisk near the door of the church. The interior of the church is very plain, and there is accommodation for about 300 or 400 people.

Just alongside the church is the University—a very young University, scarcely twenty years old, with twenty professors and 120 students. On its ground floor is the library, a very fine one too, if one takes into account the little island and its little capital. It contains 100,000 volumes and 20,000 manuscripts. Near the library is a little museum which houses paintings by Icelandic and foreign artists. Adjoining it are the state archives, containing very interesting documents about the history of the island, dating back to the tenth and eleventh centuries.

There are other palatial buildings in the square, right in the heart of which is the monument to Alberto Thorvaldsen, the famous sculptor who was born in this island in 1770, and who lived for many years in Italy and was a friend of Canova and of Goethe, whose enthusiasm for Rome and for the neo-classical revival of art at the beginning of the last century he shared. The sculptor is represented as standing erect on his pedestal, and looks smilingly down on the delicately green sward beneath him, which is protected by a railing. Incidentally, I may mention that grass is a very valuable commodity in Iceland! A baptismal font of exquisite classical design, one of the most remarkable works of Thorvaldsen, is in the cathedral.

This country, in common with the other northern nations, has kept well abreast of the advance of modern civilisation; in fact, it is one of the most progressive and most cultured nations in the world. There are practically no illiterate people. Numerous schools are scattered all over the island. There are plenty of little circulating libraries, and it was claimed some years ago that the

culture of Iceland was superior to that of Germany and England. Perhaps this is an exaggeration.

The standard of living and the harmonious rhythm of things generally in the little city of Reykjavik, where none of the mechanical devices and appliances that man has invented to make organised social life agreeable and secure, is lacking, give a pleasant surprise to us who find it hard to believe that such amenities are available in this chilly outpost of civilisation, sundered from Europe by such a long stretch of desolate sea. It has among other imposing-looking and properous banks, the National Bank of Iceland and the Popular Bank. St. Joseph's Hospital has a surgical department which would do credit to any of the great clinics of the continent. The hospital is erected on a hill to the west of Reykjavik, and is surrounded by a large garden which touches at one end the grounds of the Catholic church, while at the other end is the mariner's school. This hospital is managed by Catholic priests and was opened in October, 1902. There are no conditions and no religious or national distinctions with regard to the admission of patients.

Leprosy is a terrible plague against which the island fought—and fought successfully for the past hundreds of years. It was imported by the Norwegians. The isolation hospitals for combating it were erected in 1600. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the plague seemed to be dying out, but it became more virulent than ever towards the beginning of the nineteenth century. The leper hospital in Laugarnes, where the last surviving victims of this malady are looked after, was erected in 1898 from funds left by a noble family in Copenhagen. The very stringent hygienic and prophylactic measures adopted throughout the whole island have practically stamped out the dread scourge.

There are few countries that have such an appeal to a man of imagination as this peaceful little island. It is the classic land of Nordic sagas and legends. The story of the colonisation of the island, in particular, is very interesting. Old and young in Iceland alike place firm belief in the tradition that the founder of Reykjavik was the great Scandinavian navigator, Ingolfen, who roamed

those icy seas in quest of new lands. When he first left his native land he had sworn that he would not cease sailing until his ship landed on the shores of some unknown island. There he said he would settle down for good. At length his vessel brought him to Ingolfskordi on the coast of Iceland, which is to-day a little fishing station. Later on he settled down on the spot where now stands the city of Reykjavik, which in Danish means "smoky town." The name was suggested perhaps by the dreadful mists which in winter bury it under a heavy pall, or from the geysers which shoot jets of hot water and smoke into the air.

Some thirty years later, according to another legend, another adventurer of the seas, Eric the Great, left Iceland in quest of other regions. He had inherited the great Ingolfen's passion. With his Vikings in their purple ships he sailed to Greenland. The islanders even contend that he landed on the shores of America several centuries before Columbus performed that feat. Detailed accounts are given of his descent on Labrador and on the Canadian coast.

Whatever substratum of truth may underlie these legends, it is unquestionable that the passion for the sea always was, and is at the present day, a vital active force among the islanders. At the present day, as through the centuries, the inhabitants of Iceland live on the sea and by means of the sea. Fishing—mainly cod and salmon fishing—is the staple industry of the island. The revenue accruing from their extensive export trade in fish is sufficient to keep the islanders in a high standard of comfort and to cover all the public expenses of the little state, whose system of agriculture is very primitive. Indeed, the produce of its scanty pasture and tillage lands is negligible.

We are strangely fascinated as we watch the various activities in connection with the fishing industries of the island. Even the very young girls of the city play a prominent part in the daily round of curing and exporting cod and salmon. We see several girls appearing in the evenings in the Hotel Borg in beautiful frocks which would make Parisians green with envy, who during the

day were in working attire—long grey or white overalls, coarse woollen stockings and wooden clogs—and all busily engaged in salting or packing fish. Other girls are employed in the despatch departments or in the counting house, but their workaday garb differs very slightly from that of their colleagues who are engaged in manual labour. We notice that all the girls employed in curing and packing fish always have their hands carefully gloved while at work. And when these girls turn up in the evening at the Hotel Borg in their elegant *décolleté* frocks to dance with my boys, it is hard to realise that their white, almost transparent and daintily manicured hands have been salting and packing codfish all day long.

You frequently, especially on Sundays and gala days, see groups of women from the interior of the island dressed in their traditional garb, and I must say that I think it more charming than the conventional European dress of the Reykjavik girls. This national attire, the style of which has never changed for many centuries, consists of a satin or woollen skirt, usually black, which falls in ample folds from the hips, a bright-coloured apron and a short bodice, also in black, fitting closely to the figure and open at the bosom, in order to display a white chemisette and a stomacher of reinforced crepe material. Their girdles and necklaces are frequently of gold or silver filigree work, much after the design of the necklaces worn by women in the east.

Even the students and the sons of the middle-class people take a hand in the daily round of salting and packing fish in their spare time. And in the evenings the working men of the island will present themselves in perfectly tailored suits at the various places of amusement or at the gay informal open-air conversaciones which are a unique feature of Reykjavik.

The more well-to-do islanders rally to the Hotel Borg during our stay among them. In the spacious dining-room they hold high revel with my comrades until the small hours of the morning. The islanders, both men and women, are temperamentally very genial and sociable. They are very eager to make things as jolly as possible

for their extraordinary guests who have come down from the skies like a shower of rain upon their island. With that easy grace which is characteristic of sub-arctic folk, they promptly sweep aside both racial and linguistic barriers.

As a tribute to us the hotel band plays Italian airs every evening during dinner, and the islanders join in rendering with more volume and vim than accuracy of pronunciation the words of "Giovinezza," the song of the Alpine soldiers, and "The hymn to Rome," which is a variant of the famous song of Horace.

My Atlantic lads, with the chivalry of their race, pay special attention to the Iceland girls, who are indeed very beautiful and charming. A few of the younger officers are inclined to fall seriously in love with some of the fair visitors to the hotel. But Iceland girls, simple and unsophisticated though they look, are too level-headed and calculating to pay serious attention to the romantic blarney of young Italians who have descended among them suddenly like a bolt from the blue, and who will vanish just as suddenly.

Even girls of the poorer classes in Iceland, take for instance the housemaids of the Hotel Borg, have a standard of education and culture which is superior to the average standard among our middle-class girls. And talking about the housemaids at the Hotel Borg, there is one of them strikingly beautiful, with perfectly moulded snow-white hands and a delicately chiselled profile that might serve as a model for a sculptor in quest of true classical outlines. To complete the picture, she has the most wonderful fair hair I have ever seen, and her figure is of flawless symmetry. Captain Clingheri, the brother of my old friend Umberto, has been doing his utmost to captivate her, but without success. Her majesty the housemaid, as Colonel Longo, who too has a soft corner in his heart for the island beauties, calls her, has the knack of keeping her admirers on a string. The rebuffs which the more ambitious young officers encounter at the hands of the Iceland girls are the theme of constant banter among their colleagues. Even when they have taken a little more

whiskey and gin than usual, those maidens of the frozen north never lose their poise.

The Reykjavik people use the words "morning" and "evening," "noon" and "midnight," in speaking of the subdivisions of the twenty-four hours, although, as it is well known, there is continual daylight for six months of the year. I just mention this to show how Colonel Longo got a terrible set-back when he fully realised the gist of an appointment which an Iceland girl made with him in these words after he had paid passionate court to her :

"All right. Meet me in the park one hour after midnight, sharp."

In the first flush of triumph the Colonel forgot that in the western part of the island there are no trees, and that the tallest of the few shrubs to be found there is barely one foot high. He also forgot for the moment that at the trysting-place a pallid sun would be illuminating the alleged park. And then suddenly he realised the full implication of the assignation, and awoke from his daydream of rapture to the wan dawn of the midnight sun.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

WISHING to make some little gesture to show my appreciation of the hospitality and kindness of my generous Iceland hosts, I decide to make them a present of twenty-four cases of peaches, which are aboard our flying-boats. They had been presented to the squadron, one case per plane, before we left Italy, by my old friend, Carlo Pareschi, Director-General of the Agricultural Society. They are splendid specimens of the best-known products of my native land. However, when I give orders to have the cases brought ashore with a view to presenting them to my Iceland friends, I am informed that there are only three cases remaining, that the others had been thrown overboard as they had been damaged by the hot weather during the trip. Of course I know that this is just a tall story, and that the peaches were surreptitiously eaten by my lads somewhere *en route* from Italy to Iceland. Still, there is nothing for it but to pretend that I am satisfied with this explanation, and arrange to have the three remaining cases sent to my Reykjavik friends—two to the Prime Minister and the third to the mayor.

When the cases are opened the peaches are absolutely fresh, as they had been stowed away in the tunnels of the planes, which are ideal for storage. As fresh peaches are a very great rarity in Iceland, my friends are delighted with the gift. The Prime Minister's little daughter is quite enraptured with the luscious fruit. And when the journalists hear of my present they sent sensational reports to their papers.

The little incident of the peaches has set me thinking about the many commodities which the islanders do not

produce and with which Italy could easily supply them. The soil of Iceland, as is well known, is very poor, and its crops are negligible. All the luxuries and most of the necessities of life it gets from distant countries. And yet, although Italy buys some 13,000 tons of dried cod from Iceland every year, she sells very little in return to that island.

On the evening of July 6th we are the Prime Minister's guests at an informal dinner at which about fifty others are present, including all the representatives of the foreign consulates and a genial Dutch airman who goes up every day regularly among the clouds to study the winds in the higher strata of the atmosphere.

The Prime Minister's house is full of pictures which have been inspired by the history and the topography of Iceland. They afford eloquent testimony of the passionate love that he has for his beautiful country. And there is a ring of naive sincerity that is truly touching in his profession of great admiration for Fascist Italy.

To the Prime Minister's address in Icelandic I reply in Italian, pointing out that aviation links together nations that are most widely apart, and is a wonderful stimulus towards international peace. I assure him that the Italian aviators will carry home with them indelible memories of their stay in Iceland. Speaking for myself, I add, I shall leave Iceland with a very keen desire to pay it another visit.

Of course, we are considerably hampered during dinner by the difficulty of carrying on a conversation through the medium of languages which are so widely divergent in vocabulary and syntax. The president of the National Bank of Iceland and myself, especially, find it hard to make ourselves mutually intelligible. Then suddenly his face lights up, as he says :

" Latine loqueris ? " ¹

I delve in the hinterland of my college memories, and reply :

" Loquor. " ²

¹ " Do you speak Latin ? "

² " I speak it. "

" Roma, patria amatissima secunda ! " ¹ chimes in the Prime Minister with a genial smile.

I bow in grateful appreciation of his tribute to Rome so far away. Rome, the eternal city, the city of the world, the second motherland of all civilised nations. And after this a most animated conversation goes on during the rest of the meal in a composite language which is a rather quaint blend of classical and mediæval Latin, Italian and Icelandic. We chat about the possibilities of the development of aviation in Iceland, about its undeveloped economic resources and about the cementing of close bonds between it and Italy.

One of the favourite walks in Reykjavik is the Quay Road, across which the main street of the city runs at right angles. And the Quay Road is frequently packed with herds of Icelandic ponies—wee creatures with tails almost touching the ground, on their way to be shipped for service in the Japanese mines, where on account of their diminutive stature they are admirably suited for hauling the little trucks of coal into the galleries of the mines.

The animals are herded aboard big barges and brought alongside the steamer, which, owing to its great tonnage, cannot berth at the island quays. And then by means of broad girths passed around their bellies, the terrified animals, kicking with frantic futility, are hoisted by cranes into the hold of the big vessel. Most of the vessels trading with Japan have far more horses than passengers aboard.

During the course of our stroll along the Quay Road many spontaneous demonstrations of the enthusiastic interest taken in our expedition are made. To-day 400 American tourists landed from the Swedish steamer *Kongsholm*. The American women, instead of touring the island, have besieged the Hotel Borg in quest of autographs from us. Many of them have motored to Vatnagardar to see our planes in their anchorage. The tourists have also invited our officers to dine with them aboard the Swedish steamer.

A German 20,000-ton steamer arrives in the bay, and we are immediately surrounded by autograph-hunting

¹ " O Rome, my most beloved second native land ! "

tourists. The officers of the German vessel invite my men to dine with them in the evening. I shall not dine with them, but I remain for some time on the vessel, listening to the cheering account which the American tourists are giving of the elaborate preparations for our reception in the United States.

My officers are also invited to a dance on an English vessel. I give them absolute *carte blanche* to dance wherever they like and as long as they like, provided they return to the hotel by midnight.

A Danish cruiser is also berthed at the quay, and alongside it is a small craft, just a little bigger than our average gunboat. This little vessel has a romantic history and is known throughout the whole world. On it the famous explorer Knud Rasmussen went on his extraordinary expeditions along the coast of Greenland to the village founded by himself on the uttermost north-western verge of the mysterious polar continent. Rasmussen named this village "Thule," thus translating into fact the legend which is the theme of Goethe's famous work which our Carducci has rendered into Italian.

During his stay at Rome, Rasmussen gave me an account of his perilous journeys amidst the gigantic icebergs and floes of the Arctic region and the inextricable maze of the fjords of Greenland. He is a painstaking collector of the most ancient Nordic legends and long-forgotten sagas, and an earnest student of the customs of the Esquimaux. His writings transport one imperceptibly to the realms of dreams, until at length it is hard to trace the borderline between fact and fancy.

There are some Esquimau legends which seem to foretell in symbolical guise the advent of the aviator. Before I left Italy, Rasmussen wrote me a letter in which he told me the Esquimau legend of the magic word which can make boats fly. He also sent me two quaint drawings, one of which represented the conception of an aerodrome as visualised by the mysterious polar folk; the other drawing, an interpretation of the naïve candour of a primitive people, showed a man in a kayak, who, having forgotten the magic words that enabled him to

fly, had to make an enforced descent on a ledge overlooking a rocky precipice.

"My dear General Balbo," thus ran Rasmussen's final words, "Italy, your motherland, who has always inspired her sons to deeds of valour, can never forget the words that will inspire her aviators to do their duty during their long voyage through the air. I wish you once more a safe and successful flight."

It is a very curious whim of fate that in the harbour of Reykjavik we can actually go aboard the little vessel on which he intends resuming his famous expeditions among the desolate northern seas. Rasmussen's secretary, a tall, fair-haired girl of splendid Danish mould, who was with the explorer last year, and accompanied him on all his voyages, does the honours of the house, so to speak. She tells us that she is expecting him from day to day. In order to reach his vessel we have to cross the bridge of the Danish cruiser, *Fylla*. We are cordially welcomed by the Danish officers. Following the girl, we cross over to Rasmussen's vessel. It is a small, squat craft, with its sides considerably reinforced to resist the terrible pressure of the ice-floes—in short, it is a little marine fortress. Its cargo and appurtenances are rigorously proportioned to the narrow space available. But what it has aboard is ample for facing the long perilous voyages so dear to Rasmussen.

During our visit to Rasmussen's vessel, the commander of the *Fylla* comes aboard, and I recognise in him, to my great delight, my old friend, Captain Graueyan, the officer who represented the Danish Air Force at the International Congress of Aviation, which was held five years ago. He tells me that the Danish government is placing his vessel absolutely at my disposal, and he requests me to visit it. So I go with him, accompanied by Pellegrini and Longo. If life on the high seas is dull and hard, officers and men always have a knack of enjoying themselves to the best of their ability when they get to port, to make up for their ever grey, and often grim, experiences afloat. We gladly accept the invitation to join a knot of merry dancers aboard. A young officer who is in charge of Rasmussen's

little craft, who speaks English, French, Spanish and a little Italian, acts as master of ceremonies for the extemporised revels.

The officers of the Danish ship and the commander of Rasmussen's little vessel give me detailed information about Greenland, in which we have established a reserve base at Julianehaab, over which we have placed Captain Draghelli. Captain Recagno had already inspected the coast of Greenland in the spring of last year in quest of an anchorage suitable for our squadron, and he had found the notes given him by Rasmussen extremely useful. This year Draghelli reached Julianehaab after going through some very trying experiences. The proper time to go to Greenland is in the month of April, because later on the icebergs come drifting down from the polar floes, which begin to disintegrate under the influence of the spring warmth, with the result that the bays and inlets are impenetrable until the month of August. On the return journey it was very difficult to find a course, and two men from the base met with rather serious injuries. The base at Julianehaab is now perfectly equipped, and, under Professor Baumann's control, is the seat of the most important meteorological investigations for our squadron.

And so the days pass at Reykjavik, while we wait for the whalers to set out, and for weather conditions to allow us to venture on the most dangerous stretch of our whole flight.

While the officers are busily engaged in refuelling and getting their planes into perfect order, I keep myself daily in touch with the bases at Julianehaab and Cartwright. I am resolved to do my utmost to complete the ocean crossing in one flight, but for all that I want to keep my Greenland base in reserve for an emergency landing. There are great difficulties about alighting at the Greenland base, as it is a rather small lake wedged in among fjords with steep and lofty banks. The planes could only alight one by one in that lake, which, furthermore, has dangerous shallows. However, with all its defects, it is the only base available.

It is true that if we succeed in making a non-stop

flight from Reykjavik to Cartwright, Italian aviators will have been the first to complete at a single stretch the trip by seaplane by the northern route from Europe to America. Naturally our great ambition is to make this record, but, for all that, I would not wish to find myself with my squadron in a perilous plight on the stretch between Cape Farewell and Labrador, where the fogs swoop down suddenly from Davis Strait, and make navigation very risky even for ships. An emergency anchorage would give us a chance of waiting for the coast of Labrador to clear when we were alighting—an absolutely indispensable condition for the avoidance of irreparable disaster. Indeed, we are not so much afraid of fog during our flight over the ocean as of the danger of not having adequate visibility at the moment of our arrival. I shall be able to curb my own ardour and that of my colleagues in order to make sure that we reach our anchorage under favourable conditions. Safety first!

Meanwhile, the links of friendship and camaraderie are being more closely cemented day by day among my boys. There are only two of the personnel of the South Atlantic squadron, who are not taking part in the trip. One of them is Major Agnesi, whom I did not wish to take with me this time, because on our previous voyage he was subject to terrible fits of pre-occupation about his family, a very human and lovable trait, but one that unfits a man for a life of adventure and for the perils of a trans-Atlantic trip. At the present moment he is in command of a Do X at Cadimare. The other is Major Donadelli, who at the last moment pleaded to be allowed to come with us, but as he did not go through the course at the Orbetello school I could not accept him for our squadron. It would be a rather big responsibility to take a man who had not undergone the two years' hard training which the other officers patiently endured.

Major Marini is an absentee who is present with us in spirit. He is in charge of the drifters from Fleetwood, which we have hired for the purpose of giving us meteorological reports from the ocean.

Our contact with the Cartwright and Julianehaab bases is in perfect order. I allow two days for refuelling,

taking into account the fact that it has to be carried out in a slightly rough sea. This, of course, entails delay. We have 6600 lbs. of petrol and 440 lbs. of oil. Allowing 880 lbs. per plane for the weight of the crew and 770 lbs. for the weight of the cargo, the complete weight of the craft will be three tons and seventeen hundred-weight. If, as I reckon, the operation of refuelling can be completed in two days, we shall probably be able to start on the third day.

But as has happened all along at the various stages of our voyage, on this occasion too our plans are thwarted by the vagaries of the weather, which in these sub-polar regions is abnormally fickle and difficult to forecast. This means that we have to spend three days more in Reykjavik, i.e. six days all told.

On Sunday, July 9th, I go with my men to mass in the Catholic Church, a building erected during the nineteenth century, to which I have already referred. There are only 300 Catholics in the whole island, and the congregation consists of ourselves and six nuns.

Rasmussen has arrived at Reykjavik this morning, to my great delight. He will leave for the east coast of Greenland to-morrow. He dines with us at the Garden Restaurant, while a little orchestra renders Italian music. A tenor sings an Italian version of an Icelandic ballad. Afterwards a number of children in their picturesque island dress dance for us, and there is a series of wrestling bouts, in which the young men of Reykjavik give us a splendid display of their skill.

One of our most interesting experiences during our stay at Reykjavik is our trip to a field of geysers, explosive springs of hot water which are to be found in the island, near the River Sag. The Prime Minister's secretary acts as our cicerone. To get to the field we cut across the island some forty miles amid the desolate landscape to the rear of Reykjavik. Not a tree to be seen anywhere, and only here and there a patch of meagre pasturage. The tallest trees I have seen in Iceland are six feet high, and these I saw outside the Garden Restaurant at Reykjavik! Every now and then I see herds of wild cattle.

The Italian journalists who have come to Reykjavik to write up our expedition accompany us on our trip to see the geysers, and there is also with them an English journalist, an extremely charming fellow, whom we look upon as one of ourselves. He is an inseparable companion of Giorgio Sansa, the special correspondent of the great Fascist paper in Milan and a fluent English speaker.

When we reach the field of the geysers, we look around us on all sides in quest of the famous jets of hot water. Not a trace of them anywhere. Nothing but desolation and silence. We arrive at a patch of ground enclosed with a metal railing, in front of which the motor-cars come to a dead stop. In the middle of the enclosure is a huge hole in the ground. A little chap who is loafing about alongside is subjected to a fusillade of questions. He assures us that the water will gush out in five minutes' time. He is right. Exactly five minutes later we hear a gurgling sound, and the boiling water, exuding clouds of vapour, shoots up out of the hole to a height varying between sixty and ninety feet. The jet lasts for about ten minutes. It recurs every two hours and the people living nearby can tell to a nicety when it will start to spout when they see the first wisps of vapour issuing from the hole.

After the jet has spent its force the water gradually sinks lower and lower in the orifice of the hole, and after a little, disappears completely into the bowels of the earth. The people of Reykjavik have shown initiative in making use of the vast number of geysers in their neighbourhood for various purposes. Women find them useful for washing clothes, and there is a great scheme on hand for adapting them for heating purposes in the city.

We return from this volcanic region, which has often been devastated also by earthquakes, passing on our way through the village of Hveragerdi, where there is a little inn, which is crowded with guests in summer, and in winter is completely isolated by snowdrifts.

The Prime Minister himself acts as our guide on a trip to Pingwillir, in the valley of Thing, which is renowned among Nordic and Scandinavian folk as the

cradle of the oldest parliament in the world. There are many historic and legendary associations linked with the wild craggy precipices, and there is a beautiful expanse of green sward which commands a superb view of a stretch of country, which assumes the most magic tints during the fleeting and scarce perceptible island twilight. And there is a cascade which empties itself into a foaming torrent, and there is a tiny bridge under which flows a very clear and deep stream, confined between two precipitous rocky banks. According to a local superstition, you should toss a coin into the clear waters of this stream when you are leaving the island in order to make sure of your return to it. A similar superstition is in vogue about the fountain of Trevi at Rome. In deference to local custom I toss in a coin, which, quite visible through the clear water all the time, drops to the bottom of the torrent, some 25 or 30 feet deep at this point, and is then swept downstream. I hope that it will bring me luck.

Another token of good luck has fallen to my lot, while fishing for salmon, which are very plentiful in the waters of Iceland. I am passionately fond of fishing, and as a rule I have only to cast my line for a fish to bite after a little. But I have no luck when I go fishing in Iceland on one of the last days of my sojourn in the island. The salmon utterly ignore me and my bait. I see them in abundance gliding gracefully in the water beneath, but not one of them will honour me by springing at my hook. The sorry game has been going on for an hour, and I am about to go away in disgust, when an enormous salmon springs out of the water and actually falls at my feet. This is regarded as a miraculous happening by all the onlookers. The salmon is pretty nimble at leaping as everybody knows, but it is very rarely that he makes such a clumsy spring as not to land back in the water again.

I look on this as a very good omen at the end of our stay at Reykjavik. I return in triumph to the hotel.

CHAPTER XIV

FLYING THE OCEAN

ON the evening of July 10th everything indicates that we can start on our ocean flight at dawn. For several days the sky and the ocean have been studied with minute detail, and the reports transmitted from Reykjavik to Cartwright show an improvement of conditions all along the route. For days there had been fogs and low-lying clouds for hundreds of miles, high seas running and practically no visibility. But the wind died down completely yesterday, and swung round to the north-west to-day. And that is exactly what I was waiting for. A north-west wind on the northern stretches of the Atlantic sweeps the fogs away.

The very latest evening bulletins give favourable forecasts for the coast of Labrador. Baumann assures me that the anchorage area will be completely free from the fogs that have prevailed during recent days. And that is the most important point of all. The conditions along the ocean route are not now quite so ideal. The whalers report low clouds, varying from 90 to 150 feet, and belts of fog, while the sea is rough in Davis Strait. Still, for all that, it seems that the conditions are as good as can be expected over the 1520 miles ahead of us. Professor Baumann, at any rate, is emphatic in his opinion. In reply to a very definite query, he has informed me that his personal view is that it is a favourable opportunity for our flight.

I go to the anchorage at Vatnagardar for a last exchange of wireless telegrams. On the waters of the bay, which is hemmed in by long reaches of barren land with the basalt mountains in the background, our machines are lined up, now completely refuelled and with their

hulls very deeply immersed owing to the unusually heavy cargo. The crews are already at their respective hotels making preparations for their departure and snatching a few hours of sleep in order to be in proper fettle for the journey before them.

I have done my very utmost to keep the time of our departure secret. But during the course of the night the news has leaked out among the people of Reykjavik, who do not wish to miss the spectacle.

When on the morning of July 11th we return to the anchorage, a crowd of thousands of men and women has already descended on Vatnagardar. The shore is literally black with people. As I go down towards the anchorage I see among the others the queenly housemaid, hurrying along the narrow path.

All the city fathers are present in their silk hats which gleam in the morning sunshine. The presence of these courteous and hospitable dignitaries in their formal attire is rather embarrassing, as it seems to put a touch of finality to my departure. They have come to see me off—and, so I must go. I cannot countermand my order now, even if I want to. These kindly folk are literally pushing me into the air. But jokes apart, I really think that local magnates and the public should be present at the arrivals in port only, in the case of big aerial flights. This would ensure that decisions regarding the exact time of departure would be made with greater equanimity.

I go aboard after saying good-bye to the genial Iceland folk. I notice among them the local group of Fascists in grey shirts and brassards with the Hitlerian swastika. We ourselves are all dressed in black shirts.

The engines are already running. It is a calm morning with just a light land-breeze which strikes our planes abaft. It would be better if we got the machines all towed to the end of the bay in order to take off with greater ease with the aid of a head wind. But that would entail no less than three hours' delay. We cannot afford to lose so much time. We shall manage to take off even with the wind abaft. A weight of 76 hundred-weight will not dismay us, when we remember that each

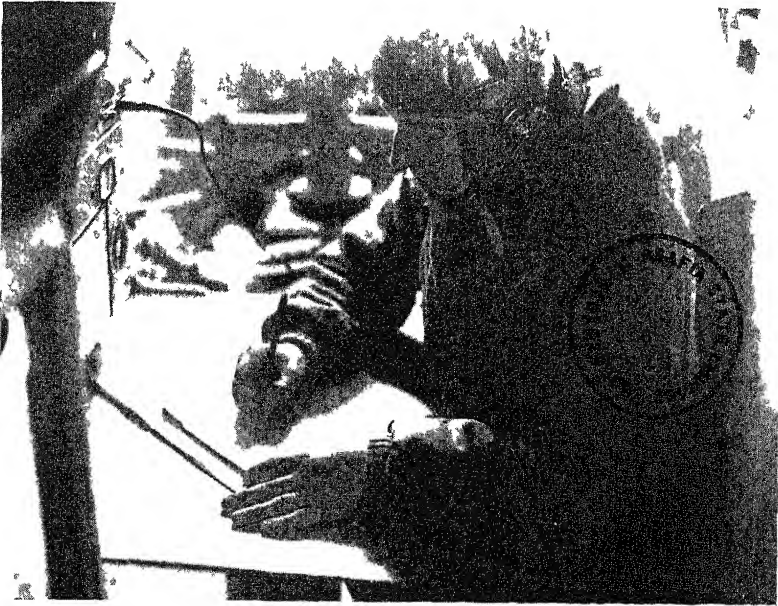
plane carried 97 hundredweight when taking off at Orbetello.

The flying-boats are now revolving around their moorings. The hawsers are cast off. One by one the machines are preparing to dart along the anchorage. As usual, my plane heads the squadron; on my right is the I-Bise, and on my left the I-Ques. The engines are kicking up a devil of a row, and my plane dashes forward, leaving a double wake of foam in its rear. I strain the muscles of my arm to make it take off, but it seems glued to the water. The hulls simply refuse to rise. After sixty seconds they still remain as deeply immersed as at the start, and show no indication of rising. This cannot go on. We shut off the engines, and ask ourselves: "What has happened? Why doesn't the plane take off?" We try again. Another headlong dash. Another desperate muscular strain to try to prize the floats from the surface of the water. No good. The water grips them like a vice. We have to stop once more. Cagna and I exchange questioning glances. We are completely exhausted by the terrible strain on our muscles. And it is utterly impossible even to guess what is amiss. I look once more at my gallant comrade; he is deadly pale and his features are drawn.

I decide that there is no use in repeating for a third time our unavailable efforts. Our engines would not stand the strain. I send a wireless message to the base for a motor-boat to tow us to the buoy.

I decide to question the others. We are now within speaking distance of Biseo, who tells us that he has had trouble with his plane, but that he managed to get it to skim the water at the first try. But good old Questa utterly failed to get his floats to budge from the water.

I summon my boys aboard the motor-launch, and hold an investigation into this mysterious paralysis which has smitten our machines. Many theories as to the cause of our failure to take off are put forward by Pezzani and Pelligrini, whom I question very closely, but nobody can really explain what is amiss. Well, the only thing for it is to try once more. Questa will make a test with his



A WIRELESS OPERATOR AT WORK DURING THE CROSSING OF THE OCEAN
ON THE OCEAN—THE FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH FOG



DISSEMBARKING AT REYKJAVIK
THE ARMADA REACHES REYKJAVIK

machine, and Cagna and Pezzani will help him to take off. We shall presently see if the flying-boat is at fault.

The machine, facing a head-wind blowing down the channel, is skimming the surface in thirty seconds. So that is the key to the riddle. One cannot ignore even a faint breeze, and one must see that it smites the plane in the prow. Well, if there is a land breeze blowing to-morrow like to-day's the first platoon must be towed to the end of the bay. Strictly speaking, we could leave even now, but it is ten o'clock, and the towing of the planes would take too long. We must wait until to-morrow.

Longo solemnly declares that Providence has decided that we should not leave to-day. Providence, he contends, has preordained everything, and there is a reason for all its dispensations. "Perhaps it is fog," chimed in one of our companions. Longo, however, refuses to discuss the subject further, as he holds that it is presumptive, as well as futile, to probe too deeply into the secret decisions of Providence.

I return to the hotel very depressed, like a whipped dog, and throw myself on my bed. I am exhausted for want of sleep, as I never close an eye on the night before a long flight. Well, I can make up now for my lost sleep. Unfortunately, the porter has removed the bedspread which I had hung up in front of the window in order to darken the room. The result is that my sleep is very fitful.

And so July 11th passes. The townspeople are very sorry for us, as they think that some terrible calamity has befallen us. We are amused at the long faces that they pull, just as we are amused at the efforts of an Italian journalist to console us by saying that he has seen "worse disasters!" The postponement of our departure till to-morrow has assumed the magnitude of a disaster in his eyes.

Weather reports pour in all day long, luckily in the same strain as yesterday's ones. During the night Baumann sends a message assuring us that the weather will be fine in Labrador to-morrow afternoon. That is good. Well, we shall start.

Captain Leone has been ill for the past three days. To-day he has a touch of something like rheumatic fever, which is very prevalent in these extreme northern climes. Incidentally, I myself suffer from a constant pain in my right shoulder in Iceland. Still, Leone will not hear of dropping out of the running now. I shall take him along, of course, and I have allowed him to take aboard with him the reserve pilot who joined us on his own plane at Reykjavik—Lieutenant Corsini, who acts as our battalion adjutant, and is busily engaged by day and night, in decoding telegrams.

So then we shall be 99 all told. Each machine will have its normal crew, which will total 96 for the 24. In addition there will be the technical officer, Pezzani, and the two reserve pilots, Corsini and Chiodi. The latter is also acting in the role of camera-man for the squadron, and is aboard the I-Long.

Another sleepless night. And now it is the dawn of July 12th. I have taken care to have a report circulated that we shall not set out to-day. My ruse has succeeded admirably, with the result that we find the shore and the anchorage silent and deserted. We halt at the wireless station to pick up the latest weather reports, say good-bye to Biondi, who is staying in Reykjavik, and embark.

The sky is dull. Black clouds are piling up from the horizon, and spreading over the sea, until presently the firmament looks like a leaden dome. It is just seven a.m. by Greenwich time as I give the order : "Start engines for the flight."

This morning, too, the wind is not really a favourable one. However, now we know the game, we veer round to the estuary. We must take off at all costs !

After thirty seconds of hard work with hand and foot my plane is speeding along the water ; after fifty seconds we have taken off ; we are soaring into the soft silent strata of the air, our faces aglow and our hearts beating with exultation.

We fly over the harbour, where we see a crowd of sailors who have been suddenly aroused from their sleep by the roar of the engines, and we head for Cape Skagi, the last outpost of Europe. We are now over the

bay of Paxafyordur, 37 miles long and 56 miles wide, at the end of which, on the verge of the tableland, Reykjavik nestles gracefully. All around the bay is the chain of basaltic hills. One pumice-stone promontory stands out bleakly against the sky, while another ends in a steep pyramid beetling many hundred feet over the sea. In the background are the dim peaks of lofty mountains. Between the bases of the mountains and the sea is a dull green declivity, along which are dotted numerous little houses. The murky clouds prevent us from being able to distinguish clearly the contrasts of light and shade, and hide from us the view of the huge extinct volcano with its spotless mantle of eternal ice and snow. Its forked peak, which gleamed in the clear sunshine a few days ago, figured prominently in a romance by Jules Verne, *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, which enthralled my boyish fancy many years ago. Yet even now, though we cannot see it, we are making preparations to fly over a very dangerous segment of its ravined and desolate flanks as we speed our way westward.

A bank of fog suddenly looms up and shuts off the view of Cape Skagi, but it clears away as quickly as it had appeared, and we can see very plainly a hundred feet below us the grey cabins of the fishermen. The waves of the Atlantic are breaking in foam against the precipitous iron cliffs.

The sea is calm—a series of eternal, long smooth Atlantic waves. About a mile to our left is a fishing smack. Onward we go for twenty minutes more when we see on our right the *Fylla*, the Danish vessel which we visited a few days ago, and which is under the command of one of our comrades. It has left Reykjavik to furnish us with weather reports.

The clouds are almost touching the long, undulating ocean rollers, so that we have to take down our aerial and make use of the fixture in one of the wings, which considerably circumscribes our zone of radiotelegraphic activity. We are flying over the surface of the sea. Normally this is not a disadvantage. When I am flying over the Tyrrhenian Sea and am in a hurry to reach my destination, I enjoy immensely descending within six

feet of the water, and revelling in the play of sun and breeze on wavelets which radiate kaleidoscopic gem-like tints. But it is quite a different thing to be hovering right over the oily ocean swell. Grey and black are the only tones that greet my eyes. The sky and the sea look like two enormous saucers whose rims are converging together to enclose the condensed gloom of the whole world. Luckily we have no great trouble about navigating and I give Cagna a cheery nod now and then as we speed along. It looks rather sombre and dull, but if we get weather like this for the whole journey we are lucky.

At the end of our first hour over the ocean we run into a patch of rain which trails us for fifteen minutes—the kind of rain that falls in my native Padua during those exasperating autumn days. Well, it won't harm us at any rate. We are not going to complain of such a trifle. But here we are once more suddenly up against a dense pall of fog. I bend forward as quickly as possible towards the altimeter to verify its record, and up we go to 460 feet. I verify the atmospheric pressure, which will be my nightmare all through my flight. I know that we have in atmospheric pressure a difference of level of eleven millimetres all along our route. Poor old Pezzani is going to get at the very least twenty messages from me during the trip, reiterating the same monotonous words: "Ask whaler X for the pressure."

At 8.30 a.m., when we are about 188 miles west of Iceland we fly into a very dense mass of fog. I order my platoon to adopt extended formation. I shall not see them any more perhaps until we reach the coast of Labrador. Still, I know that they are within a few miles of me, on my right and on my left.

For an hour we keep flying on through the fog. Then we meet with little packs of fog, into which we plunge only to find that we are out of them presently. From time to time there are gaps of clear air when we see the blue sky and the ocean rollers. These gaps are oases to our overwrought nerves. But what an endless stretch of sea before us yet! We are only at the beginning of our Atlantic flight now. The mere thought of the dull

dreary expanse ahead of us makes me mentally dizzy. What an enormous portion of the surface of our globe is covered by the sea! Perhaps it is the monotonous uniformity of the flat, grey, limitless surface of the ocean that makes a voyage across it seem far longer than a similar voyage over land. There is nothing to relieve the tired eyes. The realm of reality seems to merge into that of fancy. The unfettered imagination, like the untrammelled wind, loses itself in brooding over this seemingly endless merging of sky and sea in an ever-receding horizon. The dreary loneliness of an ocean crossing is calculated to generate curious obsessions in one's mind. One clings instinctively to the solid, material things in one's environment—one's travelling companions, the sheltering cockpit and the contours of the wings. As the hermit of the desert clings to his cell, the aviator on the high seas clings lovingly to his frail flying home. A feeling of intimacy between him and his craft develops. A veritable domestic atmosphere is created. The hours pass very slowly, and the longest hours are the last.

The flying scuds of fog are rather confusing. The plane drifts into one of them like a battering-ram attacking a fortress, and after a few minutes it emerges once more, to plunge again presently into another woolly pack. Our flight assumes the nature of an obstacle race. Sometimes I peer through my little window, eight inches long by six inches wide, at the water beneath me.

I make enquiries about the taking off of the other planes from the anchorage at Reykjavik, and learn that it was a particularly troublesome job. The wind veered in the bay, with the result that many platoons had to be towed into a favourable position to avoid taking off with the wind abeam. I am informed that Aramu had more trouble than any of the others in getting away. The reports reached me at intervals of a few minutes as platoon after platoon succeeded in taking off. If the interval between two reports seemed unduly long, I kept making inquiries again and again. It was like a slow-motion picture presented to the mental vision. It was no easy matter to control my terrible anxiety. "Will

they all succeed in taking off?" I kept asking myself again and again: "Will there be any accidents?"

At length I am informed that the last platoon has taken off, and I give a great sigh of relief. Perhaps the last of them is just driving into the fog at this moment. I think of the tense expression on the faces of my comrades, with their eyes looking fixedly ahead. I think of the straining of their muscular arms. I think of those gay young fellows with their mad pranks and devil-may-care ways when they are off duty, now alert and grim-looking with all their faculties concentrated on a task that will not brook a moment's remissness. One by one my fancy conjures them up as they follow me through the air with drawn features and set lips.

Meanwhile, the fog to which we had become used from a very early stage of our flight becomes denser and denser. The position is getting very serious. At one point (I cannot say what time exactly, as I am too pre-occupied to look at the chronometer) there is an absolute "black out." We can see nothing but the gleam of the instruments on the dashboard. We have run into a raincloud and a torrential downpour drives right into our cabin. Cagna and myself are gripping the controls firmly with our eyes fixed on the instruments. I relax my grip for a moment to write a note to Pezzani. But just at this moment the plane heels, and Cagna has not time to pass on the note to the Major who is in the boat nearest to him. He puts the piece of paper in his mouth, and holds it between his teeth, as his hand is busy with the control column. It is a terrible moment. The plane bounces up and down with quick jerky movements. It is like an earthquake in the air, so to speak. For one horrible moment we both regret that we are not strapped to our seats. But what is that shadow athwart the artificial horizon. I bring down my right foot as hard as I can. Saved!

I plead guilty to a fleeting spasm of fright—a momentary dread of the cold sea yawning to swallow the I-Balb with a swirling roar only too well known to me by experience. Just two years ago at Capri the glassy prison of the sea closed over my head.

We are now free of the rain cloud. The bobbing up and down of our plane indicated that we were emerging from the pitch-black clouds. And now we are running for a spell through a mass of grey cloud. I wish it would accompany us indefinitely—but, alas, here we are again rushing into the fog—a dense milk-white fog. Shall we never emerge from it again? It seems already to have lasted for an eternity. I send a message to the other planes: "We are flying for the past half an hour through very dense fog. Spread out in as extended formation as possible." I put on my sun spectacles to write the message, as there is a glare through the mist that blisters my eyes. Cagna nods to me to take a hand at the control column. I see what he is up to. He also puts on his black spectacles. Then we both have some hot coffee with a nip of brandy in it. We find it very refreshing.

And now I am puzzling out another problem in my mind. It just occurs to me that higher up it may be clear. The bank of fog cannot possibly extend far up in the air. I remember Gronau's view that fog is rarely found at a height of over 3000 feet. But how are we to climb? Our wings just now are drenched with rain, and the temperature even at a height of 450 feet is only four degrees above zero. If we go up any further it is certain that the temperature will fall, and that ice will form on the wings. We must only have patience.

I call the roll of my crews. My wireless is kept going all the time. Will those dreadful hours of flight through the fog never end? I fancy that they have already lengthened into months.

I give instructions that no plane is to go at a speed of over 1600 revolutions for fear of collisions, and I insist on them all keeping at the altitudes set for them. The fog is now denser than ever, but the air is calm, and the movement of my machine is perfect. Our engines are working magnificently. The going is so smooth that it is barely necessary to keep one's hand on the control column.

Suddenly Pezzani, who goes from one boat to the

other to regulate the pressure on the altimeters, pops out of the left boat, waving a red radiogram triumphantly. What's up now? Biseo has sent us word that 1500 feet up the sun is shining.

We accelerate by 100 revolutions and climb. The fog gradually becomes thinner and thinner the higher we go, and now there is a fitful ray of sunshine. Presently it gets brighter and brighter. We see our own shadows beginning to take shape. The air is clearer. And here, at last, the sun shines down on us in all its glory. Beneath us is an impenetrable sea of fog, above us is a bright blue sky, rivalling that of Italy. I immediately send word to all the other machines. I can save the last planes that started, from the nightmare which I have just shaken off. Longo took off with his boys at a tremendous distance from the first squadron. Perhaps he will be in time to climb up out of range of the treacherous pall of fog the moment it looms up before him.

I send this message: "Height 800, bearings 290, revolutions 1600, sky clear. Beneath sea hidden by thick fog. All planes to acknowledge this notification. And a little later I send another message: "I am anxious to know if all have got clear of the fog and are flying above the clouds at the heights given by me."

Now I feel an almost childish delight, a sense of liberation, such as one feels on awakening at dawn after a terrible dream. Such a blue sky! Imagine our exultation as we fly along with roaring engines! Never before did I gaze with such wonder and delight on an azure firmament. What does it matter to us if the masses of fog extend beneath us as far as the eye can reach? We can depend on our engines. We know that the coast of Labrador is clear, for we have just received a message from Lieutenant-Colonel Barba who has left Cartwright to investigate conditions along with Caproncino of the *Alice*. He tells us that the sky is clear from the bay of Cartwright to distance of fifty miles seawards, but that does not matter now. We won't worry any more about fog beneath us.

At 2.45 p.m., the sea of fog ends. We have already passed Cape Farewell. I have scanned the horizon in

vain for a glimpse of the mountains of Greenland! Perhaps that lofty luminous cloudy hill which I have just seen on my right was one of these majestic icebergs which my friend Rasmussen described to me, white semi-transparent gigantic masses standing against the sky-line. Perhaps on one of its peaks is lodged the boat of that legendary old Greenlander who forgot the magic word that gave him the power of flying through the air. I can see before me the naively vivid sketch of the painter showing the sharp prowed bow of the kayak hanging over the verge of the abyss. Nordic flights of fancy are of a rather nightmarish kind such as the Arctic Ocean might be calculated to inspire. The cruel grandeur of its icefields holds the human imagination in the grip of its chilly spell.

Underneath us is the sea now plainly visible once more—a sea tossing in wild fury and hissing with foam. A west wind is blowing which is hampering our speed. At 4 p.m., we are in the vicinity of the “Balilla,” but unfortunately a huge bank of cloud which swoops down on the sea prevents me from seeing it. I have a message for the submarine, a letter to Commander Della Campana from his fair daughter far away in old Italy. But the vessel with the Italian tricolour stamped on its steel flanks is down deep beneath the green waves and the heavy pall of cloud. Perhaps the roar of our engines is heard by them above the thunder of the frenzied waves against their keel.

The sailors of Italy are just as enthusiastic about our flight as we airmen are ourselves. During the past month the submarines have been working for us and with us. They were the first to take their post out here. They have had to fight a lone battle against the fury of the waves, lashed by the tempestuous blasts of Davis Strait. Untiring and indomitable, the Italian sailors are giving the world proof of their magnificent spirit, and they are showing what solidarity prevails between the warriors of the sea and those of the air, when the honour of their country is at stake. An emotion, which is a blend of camaraderie and of sympathy with them for the hardships they are enduring for our sake, fills our hearts as

we send our greetings to our comrades whom we cannot see although they are so near us.

At 4.44 p.m. we enter a bank of fog again, but a much lower one this time. I send another message to all planes: "I am meeting with more fog. Fly over it. Height 300, revolutions 1600. I am anxious for a report from I-Long."

Longo is flying quietly in the rear of the squadron. My causes for anxiety are diminishing more and more. My plane is getting much lighter now. I could travel the rest of the journey to Labrador with one engine. The fog is thinning out.

We plane down and at a height of 150 feet we are free of the blinding white mass. We can see the ocean again—a very stormy ocean. Once more our minds are with our gallant sailor comrades, who are still battling with the raging waves. The visibility is poor, but we are nearing Labrador. As we were passing Cape Farewell we got in touch with the *Alice*, and we know that we are on the right track.

At 5 p.m. the sky is cloudless and bright, and the sea has calmed down somewhat. At 5.10 a tiny black speck is visible on the sky-line. Is it a ship? The speck gets bigger. The outlines of a hull and masts stand clearly out. Is it the *Biglieri*? At 5.15 we are flying over it at a height of sixty feet. Yes, it is the little Italian craft. Its flag is floating, and men are clinging to its shrouds like bunches of grapes. They are the Italian sailors with faces upturned towards us, and they are frantically waving caps, handkerchiefs and scarves. A thin white feathery spiral column is shooting upwards from the base of the smoke-stack—we know that the siren is emitting one long unending blast of welcome. This ship represents my country to me. I know that all our people are following our every move with feelings of confidence and triumph. I dash away the tears that well up in my eyes. I glance at Cagna. He too has tears in his eyes. Thus it is that the conqueror shows his weakness in the very moment of victory.

We soar in a wide circular sweep over the *Biglieri*, and send a message: "Hello, Commandant. God save Italy!"

After a few minutes low clouds well up. We fly over them at a height of 1500 feet. This is the fog that Lieutenant-Colonel Barba saw this morning, but it is now vanishing beneath the sun's rays. On the horizon there is a line of icebergs. They look like houses that have been wrecked by an earthquake. Bulking eerily against the sky-line they move onward slowly.

But what is that line now along the horizon? A thin ribbon almost greyer than the sea, but more suggestive of solidity than the stratified clouds above it. The nearer we come to it the more definite is the outline. It is getting darker in hue. It is standing out more clearly now over the verge of the ocean; it opens up, disappears, but emerges again, seeming, however, a little more remote this time. Land! The coast of Labrador—our goal! Our dream has come true.

I telegraph immediately to the Duce who at this moment is anxiously awaiting news, and is keeping in constant communication with the head of my department. His anxiety symbolises the tense feelings of the whole nation, whose soul he represents. My emotion at this moment as I am wording my despatch to him is only equalled by my pride in having fulfilled my duty. And this is the message that I send him on the wings of the invisible ether: "Once more, Duce, I feel proud of having fulfilled your instructions."

A peculiar sense of semi-intoxication sweeps over me, and in my heart unwritten songs of victory are echoing. The eyes of my companions are radiant with joy. The sea which sparkles beneath the rays of the sun seems to join in our exultation with its crystalline foam-capped waves. Our Fascist native land may well be proud of its airmen. They have brought honour to the uniform of the black shirt which they will proudly wear as they enter America.

I telegraph to the crews: "The pilots are authorised to wear to-day under their tunics the black shirts which they have worn during the flight."

And now the icefield is beneath us—the great crust of ice which the Arctic is driving southwards towards the tepid waters of the Gulf Stream. The ice is disintegrating.

The ice-field is almost half a mile wide, and its length is seemingly limitless. It runs into all the inlets and bays along the coast. It looks like a huge stretch of white glassy pavement for this northern land. Every now and then an abnormally white flag, gleaming like marble, is islanded in this rough vitreous pavement, which is a solidly cemented mass of the most eccentric contours, formed by the restless waves which were frozen hard during the process of their eternal ebb and flow.

These are the Gameth islands on our right, completely shut off by the drifting icebergs, and bereft of any indication of life in any shape. We have just another twenty miles to cover—a few minutes' flight. We skim over a barren rocky hill, and now right ahead of us is Sandwich Bay, at the base of which the *Alice* is moored, while a little further on are the few wretched little huts which comprise Cartwright. However, I don't wish just yet to reveal myself. I fly as low as I can manage over the scanty vegetation, which consists of pine trees. In my anxiety not to be observed I almost graze the tree-tops. I turn round to see how the squadron is forming up on the ice-field. The I-Bise, I-Ques and the I-Pell have not yet arrived. I have travelled too fast for them. And yet it could not be avoided. I kept to the same altitude, 450 feet throughout all the first stage of my flight. Then I climbed to 1500 feet, planing down subsequently to 600 feet.

But now I see two faint lines along the horizon—two specks on the sky—two machines, Questa's and Biseo's. Yes, here they are coming. Let us go to meet them. I fly towards them at exactly their own altitude, and then I turn right about. In less than no time the other two planes of my platoon are in position, one on my right and the other on my left. For the second time since the start of our expedition I address my comrades in a formal speech.

“ Officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers ! ”
my radio message runs. “ I am in sight of the coast of Labrador. In a short time our great task will be finished. Before alighting, and while our squadron still hovers over

the North Atlantic which is strewn with floating icebergs, I wish to convey to you all my warmest congratulations. You will never forget the hardships of this day, but neither will the Royal Air Force, which consecrates the task you have accomplished to our noble country and through it to their Duce. Long live the King!

GENERAL BALBO.

*North Atlantic Sky,
July 12th."*

My thoughts travel on the ether with the words which have come from my heart and which have now reached my crews, who are radiant with triumph.

Immediately I send the following radio message to all the crews: "When all the machines are anchored, refuelling operations shall start immediately. All are to remain on board with the exception of platoon commanders who will disembark for the meeting which I shall hold on the *Alice*."

The iron discipline of the squadron sets bounds even to the jubilation of the men. We must set off again tomorrow. We cannot let this spell of good weather slip by without availing ourselves of it. We shall make all the use we possibly can of it.

Now the squadron is lining up. The first platoons are to our rear as I proceed to enter the bay. An American seaplane with a lot of press photographers aboard, which has been wheeling round in the air, passes between my machine and Biseo's. They have narrowly missed colliding with us. Three steamers are anchored in the bay, the *Alice* with her shapely white contours and her cut-water tapering in a prow as sharp as a ploughshare, an American steamer, which is, I am aware, the refuelling base for Lindbergh's next ocean flight, and a cold storage steamer for salmon. All are beflagged. The sirens are shrieking. And now we have a view of the wretched little village of Cartwright—a few little timber houses set against a rather depressing background of greyish green vegetation. Thickets of stunted firs dotted among barren crags. Two piers jutting out from the coast into the sea.

I make a great circular sweep over the village, around the vessels in the bay, between the two spurs of desolate land. We alight without a hitch and moor our planes to the buoys straight away. It is exactly 7 p.m. Our flight has lasted just twelve hours.

The engines stop. The sudden silence puts us all under a spell. We feel as if there were an elemental lull in the motion of the universe, as if silence and inertia had spread over interstellar space.

We do a lightning toilet. A motor-launch is coming towards us. Standing in the bow is Colonel Barba, who has organised the Cartwright base for us. When we meet we are both too full of pent-up emotion to express ourselves in words. However, our eyes are more eloquent than any set speeches could be.

The American seaplane has alighted near us and press photographers are busily focusing their cameras on us. Another boat comes alongside us. Caveri, the operator of the *Luce*, has set up his tripod at a commanding point and is busy at work, surrounded by a small army of colleagues. I cross on Barba's motor-launch along with Cagna and Pezzani to the *Alice*. A picket of marines presents arms. They are the old sea wolves of Porto San Stefano, with faces tanned by the sun and the sea air. Rough-featured fellows, but with a kindly and generous look in their eyes. I salute the commander of the *Alice*, who is full of excitement. "Bravo, Balilla Longo! You beat the ice-breaker!" I have hardly exchanged my first greetings with him when the Italian journalists, all old friends of mine, to whom I have already referred, appear. They have a tanned and hardy appearance. One of them has grown a long beard since I last saw him.

Feeling very thirsty I drink a glass of lemon-squash which a radiant-looking old salt fetches for me, and then I hurry to the cabin to write my report to the Duce and a few telegrams.

The squadron is alighting in perfect formation, at intervals of a few minutes. The commanders step aboard the *Alice*. Here they come—Pelligrini, Giordano, Nannini, Teucci, Biani, Longo, Recagno and the rest. The pro-

ceedings at the meeting are brief. I already know all the details about the journey. Now it is past, and we have time to think of the flight ahead of us. We definitely decide to start to-morrow.

My officers are all around me when a telegram from the Duce is handed to me.

"Now that you have brilliantly finished the first difficult stage of your voyage I congratulate you and the comrades of your flight across the Atlantic."

We are all thrilled as we read the Duce's words. His very voice seems to ring in our ears along the shores of the desolate bay.

I send a reply in the following terms: "In all we do, we follow implicitly the instructions of the Duce."

Numerous telegrams are sent, and the wireless operator is kept very busy.

The commander of the *Alice* has invited us to dine with him at the hut of the Grenfell Institution, but before doing so I make a swift tour of inspection of the planes to see for myself how the refuelling operations are going on. I am surprised at the remarkable speed with which they have set about the job. These fine fellows are working like galley-slaves after their very strenuous twelve hours' flight across the Atlantic. Officers and non-commissioned officers alike, without distinction, take the petrol cans from the boats, pass them to one another and fill the tanks without showing any indication of exhaustion. They are also most particular in seeing that no stranger is permitted to embark on any of the planes.

I inquire about the condition of the planes, and am told that they are all in perfect order, and that they do not need even the most trivial repairs. We had sent across in advance a vast assortment of spare parts aboard the *Alice*, for which we have no need.

Night is drawing on. The first night we have seen for over a week. In the darkness the little winking lights that seem to talk to one another from ships to shore and from shore to ships, sparkle more brightly. We go ashore to dine. The journalists have put up a scroll with a motto in huge characters from the classics over the door of the Grenfell Institution. The stokers of the *Alice*,

irreproachably attired in white jackets, act as waiters. Towards the close of the meal the journalists present me with a bottle of very old "Grappa di Bassano"—a delightful wine which I pass round to my companions, having sampled it myself. They are all most enthusiastic in expressing their appreciation of its bouquet. And then we have songs galore—"Giovinezza" and "The Hymn to Rome" are followed by war songs in which we all join. Paolo Monelli, a veteran Alpinist, takes it upon himself to lead the choruses, but he is appallingly out of tune all along. After a bit we depose him, and give the job to Nannini and Leone, both of whom have perfectly true voices. The last item of our impromptu programme is an exhibition of a tarantella dance given by Captain Fraili and Captain Frabetti, two splendid types of the "Young Italy" school, who know how to combine *joie de vivre* and patriotism.

At midnight all are in bed, and dead silence broods over the *Alice*. Solar time has played us a funny joke by adding four hours extra to our day.

CHAPTER XV

IN LABRADOR AND MONTREAL

IT is the morning of July 13th. We are out of bed at the first bugle blast, and the *Alice*, which had been lying for hours like an old derelict ship in a dead-water, is agog with life and bustling activity. The preparations for our departure are carried out with feverish speed.

The wireless operators are kept very busy handling the enormous number of messages which arrived while we were asleep. It will be some days before I can reply to many of them. Time is precious to me just now, and I have a lot of business to despatch before starting again.

My first thought in the morning has always been about the weather ever since the start of our trip, and my mood is always a reflex of the mood of the sea and the sky. To-day we have no weather reports because we have no transmitting station. But then we have the sun, and it promises us a safe and easy journey. In order to avoid confusion I have decided that we shall make our reckonings by Greenwich time, instead of going by the solar hour, or by Canadian or American time.

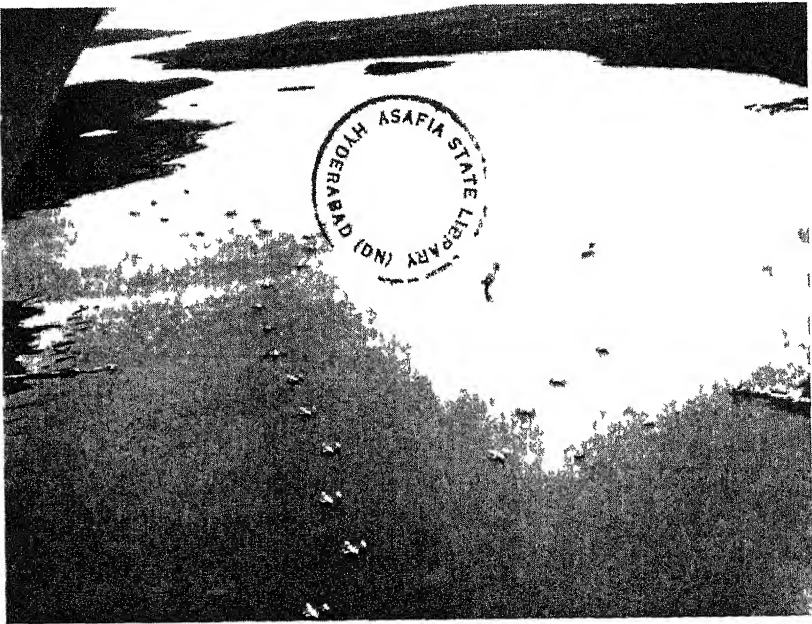
When I leave the ship and go aboard my plane I find that the crews are all ready. After the splendid way they worked yesterday evening, we have nothing to do but to set the engines going and to start forthwith. A light breeze is blowing from the west. The human freight of my squadron is increased to-day. We have in addition to our crews, totalling ninety-nine, five journalists, two cameramen, two civilian workmen and five mechanics. The extra men are distributed among various planes. To-day's flight will cover 812 miles, but our total freight

differs very little from what we carried from Reykjavik.

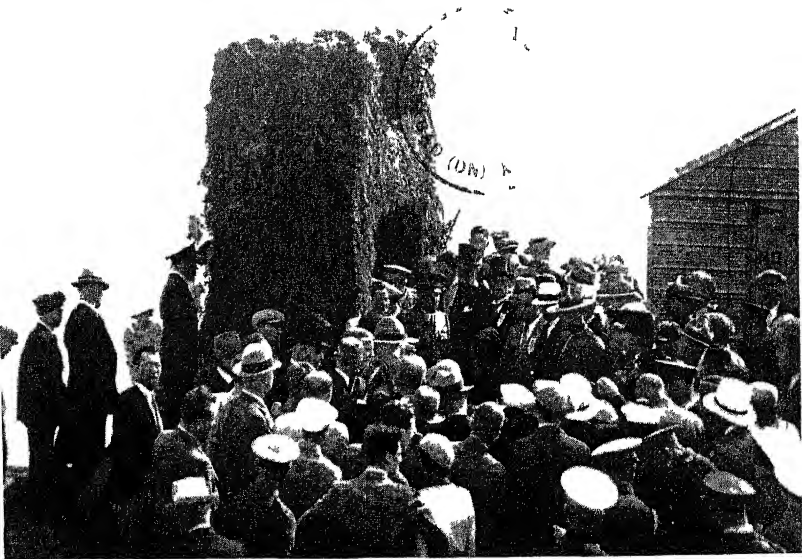
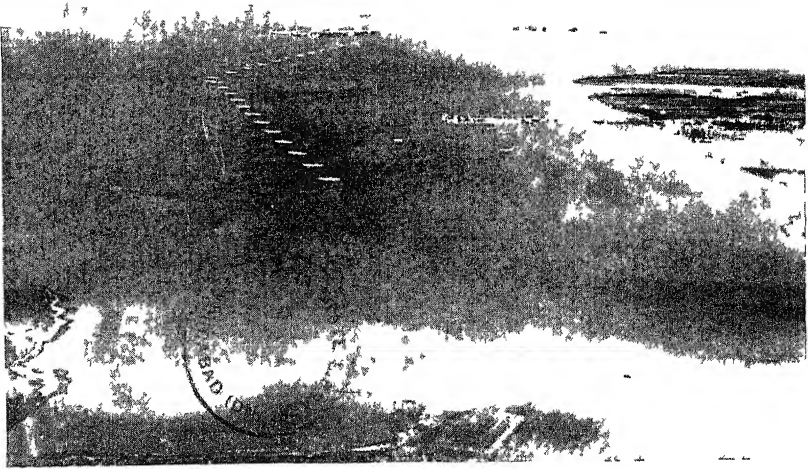
Every machine has aboard 3267 lbs of petrol and 352 of oil, but in addition to extra people, we also carry an ample supply of spare parts which we may need during the further stages of our expedition. And then we have also taken our kit, which had been left waiting for us on the *Alice*, and which we shall need for the receptions waiting for us in America. We have flown the Atlantic with the minimum of personal belongings. Now we shall have to wear our uniforms. At Shediac I shall meet my nephew, who has more of my belongings, and the rest I shall pick up at Chicago. The journalists have enormous and very heavy suitcases. All these things, of course, help to add to the weight of each individual plane, which amounts all told to 3 tons, 9 cwt. and 62 lbs.

Usually the stretch between Labrador and Canada is impassable for airmen, and is even frequently very risky for sailors. An aeroplane, quite recently, which crossed Belle Isle Strait, was unable to make the return journey. The fogs from the Arctic frequently get lodged for a long time between Labrador and Canada, while the icebergs that float from the polar icefields drift into Belle Isle Strait and remain there for months without melting. This strip of sea is a formidable barrier for either airman or sailor intent on probing the riddle of the sphinx of Northern Canada. But our squadron is quite prepared to face this difficult patch. If we encounter fog on our route we have had sufficient practice by now to cope with it. In aviation success frequently depends upon the ability to avail oneself of the opportune moment. It is quite possible that if we had rested for a few hours more after flying the Atlantic we would have paid dearly for doing so. By leaving straightway we have been taking a chance to a certain extent, but, all things considered, I can say now that it has been a very successful stage of our flight.

I say farewell to Lieutenant-Colonel Barba and to Balilla Longo, the commander of the *Alice*, while the picket of marines on the vessels presents arms. The task



BALBO 1 FROM THE ILICL WFI COMES THE LAST PLATOON OF THE ARMADA
 AS IT ARRIVES AT CARTWRIGHT
 THE HYDROPLANES AT ANCHOR IN CARTWRIGHT BAY



IN SHEDDIAC BAY
ON THE WOODEN SLIPWAY AT SHEDDIAC

of the *Alice* is now finished up here and it will set out in a few days for Shoal Harbour, where it will wait in readiness for our return flight over the Atlantic.

The *Alice* will have the honour of welcoming Colonel Lindbergh as its guest to-morrow. I had been hoping to meet him at Cartwright. He is contemplating a flight across the Atlantic practically along our recent route, but in the opposite direction. He left New York three days ago, but he encountered fog on the sea-board of Connecticut, Maine and Newfoundland, which forced him to alight and to-day he is weather-bound at Halifax.

Before giving the order to take off I arrange for a careful inspection of the stretch of water on which our machines are to run. I thought that I had seen bits of driftwood and fragments of ice floating on its surface. The icefield is not very far away, and the shores of the bay which are lashed by the waves are lined with trees and shrubs.

Now everything is ready, and I give the signal. My engines and those of the two planes in my platoon are filling the air with a deafening roar, and are starting to skim along the water. It is 1.20 p.m. by Greenwich time, and 9.20 a.m. by local time.

The I-Balb takes off with clockwork precision in a few seconds—so do the other two planes of my platoon. Immediately three other machines cut adrift from their buoys and cut through the water, while two lines of foam follow in the wake of their keels. Platoon by platoon, the squadron climbs upward and follows me in a wide circular sweep over Sandwich Bay.

I give a last glance at the bay on which our thoughts had been centred so longingly for many months, and at the desolate landscape. The little colony of fishermen's huts, on which the eyes of the world had been focused for a brief spell, is once more just a desolate outpost on the verge of the realms of everlasting ice. A farewell salute is given to us by the three vessels in the bay, the *Alice*, the *Jenning* and the *Blue Peter*, flying the Italian, English and American colours, the flags of their respective nations. I see the thin white ribbon of steam trailing skywards from their sirens, but the blasts, which I know

are echoing among the wild hills that skirt the horizon, do not reach my ears.

Farewell, mysterious region of snow-clad hills and ice-bound lakes, sanctuary of the reindeer and the silver fox, home of the countless shoals of salmon that glide seawards every spring. It was an Italian, Giovanni Caboto, who, under the ægis of the British Government, first probed this wilderness, and there is a tradition that the disillusioned pioneer summarised his views of the country in these words: "God collected all the sweepings left after the creation and made Labrador out of them." But the Italians who are flying over Labrador to-day have only very pleasant memories of a land which greeted them with a bright and smiling sky. And now as I am skimming along its coast it looks less gloomy and desolate. This is the great month for salmon-fishing, and I catch glimpses of numerous huts in the more sheltered corners of little inlets of the sea. Spires of smoke trail upwards from these temporary shelters of the sturdy fishermen, who return every summer to seek a livelihood in their frail vessels amid the drifting icebergs.

The sky is dotted with little patches of low-lying clouds. A head wind which seems likely to confront us all through our journey is buffeting our machines. Still the air is clear along the coast, and from an altitude of 1500 feet, I can easily discern the contours of the landscape opening out to our right.

Here and there are little rocky islets fringed with yellowish foam, and tiny lakes bordered by trees which the fierce winds have twisted into the most fantastic shapes. Numerous rivers wind along the rugged landscape, momentarily disappearing among clumps of gnarled trees and eventually reaching the sea through wide clefts in the precipitous, rocky cliffs.

At 1.37 p.m. as we are passing over Fybelly Isle we see an icefield. The Island of Pools looks very grim and black with gleams of white reflected from the stretches of water in its interior. We catch a glimpse of Spotted Isle with its weird precipitous cliffs of black and white crags, and continue our course over a group of little islands, which protect the entrances to the numerous land-locked

bays. Once more we see patches of ice, while on the seaward skyline there is a crescent-shaped array of mountainous icebergs. Masses of snow in the ravines and valleys along the coast give pallid splashes of colour to the bleak inert landscape.

At 2.5 p.m. we start our normal speed of 1600 revolutions, and a little later we are flying over Great Caribou, the island which, together with Battle Island, defends the capital of Labrador.

In Narrow Harbour, St. Michael's Bay and at Cape Lewis the fishing villages are larger and more numerous. All the houses are alike—wretched little hovels of timber. We also see little fleets of fishing vessels huddled together under the shelter of rocky recesses which form natural havens. They belong to the Hudson Bay Company which for centuries has held a monopoly of the fishing and hunting rights all over Labrador.

The sky is all the time dotted here and there with little cloud drifts. The seaward horizon is covered with dense fog, and big waves are running before a south-west wind which is hampering us. However, we are proceeding at such a satisfactory rate that I send the following message to the planes: "If the weather permits it, we may be able to fly in close formation, but, instead of keeping too close to one another, the platoons are to climb to varying altitudes."

In the open sea ice-floes are appearing once more, and are drifting very slowly with the current. We are now entering Belle Isle Strait, and are passing in front of Saint Pierre Bay and Château Bay. The sky has suddenly become free of mist and cloud. A little steamer is crossing the strait in an opposite direction to us. Along the horizon a mountainous iceberg of dazzling whiteness is slowly drifting along.

Leaving Labrador to our rear, we cut right across the strait, and make for the coast of Newfoundland which we shall follow right along from the Flower Ledge lighthouse to Rich Point. It is a level coast intersected with tiny bays. The links with humanity seem fewer here, too, than even in Labrador. One sees nothing but stretches of forest intersected with patches of stagnant water as far

as the eye can reach. It would be fatal to go astray in this wilderness.

After a considerable time we see a few villages dotted here and there on the tongue of land which is half hidden in fog. The most conspicuous of these villages is Saint George. We now turn leftwards along the coastline, which abruptly veers eastward, and see a railway line bordered by telegraph poles. Whence does it come and whither does it go? I have no time to try to puzzle this out, as meanwhile enormous banks of fog surge up before me, spreading right over this jutting promontory of Newfoundland and blotting out the coastline. However, the sea is clear and so we wheel round this dense mass of fog as if we were going round the base of some impassable mountain. We fly at a height of 300 feet between a sky and sea of delightful blue. Now we are over the Bird Rocks, two lonely, steep, craggy eminences, the home of myriads of sea-birds. We scan the horizon in quest of Magdalen Island.

At length we see the shadowy outline of a stretch of land, and later on another shadowy outline and another. It looks more like an archipelago than an individual island. But, in fact, these little projections which look like islets are the rounded peaks of Magdalen. It is a phenomenon caused by the good visibility prevailing. From afar only the peaks are visible, while the low-lying land that links them together is hidden. We approach close to the island, and skirt along its southern coast towards Prince Edward Island, on which at length we see cultivated fields, well-built houses and even an occasional mansion with pasture lands and meadows around it. This is our first glimpse of civilisation once more, after travelling over such vast tracts of bleak ocean and bleaker land. A railway which cuts right across the island, linking together towns and smiling villages at frequent intervals, leads to Charlottetown, the capital of the island, and a thriving commercial centre.

The coastline is, if possible, even more indented than that of Labrador. There is just a series of little bays with slender strips of land dividing them, and the estuaries of these little bays are protected by small islands and

reefs. At 6.15 we reach Malpeque Harbour, the deepest bay on the southern side of the island. The stretch of land which we have crossed is not more than nine miles in length. Now we are flying over the Northumberland Strait which divides Prince Edward Island from the State of New Brunswick in Canada. Another half-hour's flight, and at 7.16 p.m. we are in sight of Shediac.

Before entering the splendid bay at the base of which is the bathing resort of Shediac, the squadron makes a wide circular sweep by the left in order to get into line. The weather is splendid just now and the sea is quite calm. At the entrance to the bay the Canadian cruiser *Saguenay* is moored. She salutes us as soon as we come in sight. We are flying over her at a low altitude and we see the great flags floating from her bow and stern, and the puffs of smoke issuing from the guns. Another thin stream of smoke along the funnel shows us that the siren is giving us a clamorous greeting, which the roar of our engines prevents us from hearing. It is 7.27 p.m. when the squadron in close formation, with the various platoons at different altitudes, flies over Shediac, and prepares to alight. My machine is the first to anchor. It is just 7.34 p.m.

We have completed 805 miles at a speed of 130 miles an hour, though we were hampered from the beginning to the end of our flight by adverse winds. All the platoons, in the wake of mine, alight in the anchorage with clock-work precision.

The banks are black with people. We see from afar great festoons of flags and bunting. A motor-launch draws up alongside my plane, having on board Captain Campanelli, the commander of the base, who was with me in South America during our first trans-Atlantic flight. Stepping on the wharf I meet my nephew, my old friend Nello Quilici, Major Gardenghi, Chief of the Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Aviation, and Cecconi, my private secretary.

A huge triumphal arch made of branches of trees interwoven with flowers, has been erected at the end of the pier by the people of Shediac, who greet us with wild enthusiasm. The official representatives of the Canadian

Government and those of the State of Brunswick are also present. The Italian consul-general at Ottawa, Signor Petrucci, introduced me to the representative of King George of Great Britain, Mr. MacLean, who is also deputy governor of New Brunswick, and also to Dr. Murray MacLaren, a member of the Canadian Cabinet, and to General Parson, commander-in-chief of the Army, and to the mayor of Shediac, Dr. Sormani, who is of Italian origin.

I am rather fascinated by the curious uniform of the local body of police, who present arms in my honour—huge broad-brimmed hats of the deerstalker type, scarlet tunics, loose khaki riding breeches and yellow leather leggings. They are patterned on the old colonial type of the sixteenth century, and they speak the French of Racine's period. In fact, the language of the days of Louis XIV is still spoken throughout the vast territories of French Canada. I am also introduced to a very fine type of an English gentleman, Dr. Clarence Webster, a famous surgeon, who after having lectured for many years at the University of Chicago, has retired to French Canada to study the history and customs of the people. Dr. Webster, who had paid frequent visits to Italy and who has devoted a good deal of time to the study of our language, is the president of the reception committee at Shediac, who have arranged an elaborate programme to welcome us.

After waiting for the platoon commanders to disembark, while the rest of the men remain aboard to carry out refuelling operations, I drive to the principal square of the town between rows of wildly cheering people.

The square has been gaily festooned by the generous people of Shediac. Right in its centre is a lofty flagstaff surmounted by an enormous luminous star, on the rays of which are inscribed the names of our various halting-places. On the four sides of the square are erected pavilions for the public, the veranda of the leading hotel of the city being the grand-stand, so to speak. Here the members of the corporation of Shediac are assembled to welcome us, while a small army of cameramen and radio operators is buzzing all over the place. Several

speeches are delivered to which I reply in Italian. The proceedings wind up with a regular carnival of band playing and flag-wagging, while later on there were fireworks displays all over the city.

At length, dog-tired, I drive to Dr. Webster's home, a fine wooden building, on a grassy slope overlooking a park. Here I hold a brief conference with my officers, and make arrangements for our flight to Montreal in the morning. After supper with the Webster family I am glad to stretch my weary limbs in the luxurious bed which my hosts have prepared for me. In a few minutes I am sound asleep.

Dawn—July 14th. I awake refreshed and feel quite fit for to-day's flight. It is over 440 miles from Shediac to Montreal, and we shall be flying over land practically all the time. We shall have to depend altogether on our engines. Furthermore the weather has changed for the worse since yesterday. Great clouds are scudding across the sky, and there is a strong hint of rain in the wind. Still the weather reports that we receive are fairly reassuring. Conditions won't be exactly ideal, but we shall be able to travel.

I say farewell to the Webster family, whom I hope to see soon again on our return flight via New York, and drive to the anchorage.

Our freight for the comparatively short flight before us is pretty heavy—about 6000 lbs., including 3388 lbs. of petrol, 352 lbs. of oil and 990 lbs. of other accessories. The balance of our freight consists of our crews and the numerous passengers whom each plane is carrying. We have picked up four extra people at Shediac, so that all told the squadron has a human freight of 117.

When I step on board my machine it is 11.39 a.m. by Greenwich time, i.e. about 8.30 a.m. by local time. Soon afterwards I take off, making a wide circular sweep to the left towards the island of Shediac at the mouth of the bay. We then fly right over the city and go ahead, steering our course by sight and climbing in slow stages. A south-westerly gale, a sky practically completely overcast, a choppy sea running—such are the conditions we have to encounter. Right from the start our machines

toss considerably—a very unpleasant phenomenon which persists all along our route to Montreal. We climb to 2250 feet, and then by successive stages to 3750 and 4800 feet, until eventually we reach 9000 feet, at which altitude at length we get some relief from the eternal violent tossing.

Our route to-day is over green undulating lands, magnificent expanses of forest, and lakes and rivers brimming with crystal-clear water—a delightful landscape which, to judge from an impressionist glance from our altitude, seems absolutely untenanted by man. This absence of any link with humanity is the dominant feeling that obsesses us during our flight over Canada, a vast and beautiful country, with a territory exceeding that of the United States, and with a population of something between eight and nine million souls. And as a few large cities absorb a considerable percentage of this sparse population, it is not to be wondered at that enormous tracts of the country are utterly uninhabited. We search in vain for any trace of a highway for a long time, and then at length we see beneath us a thin straight yellow streak cutting through forests, bridging streams and disappearing on the skyline. But these faint yellow ribbons which represent the highways of Canada are very few and far between. The cities are built near great waterways, and are all of a uniform geometrical design, with similar rectangular street-planning, and similar squares, like the patterns on a chess-board.

In the early stages of our flight over New Brunswick we see large areas under grain. This region is in more direct contact with the Atlantic, and has some beautiful little towns like Moncton and Fredericton, the latter situated on the River St. John. In its rear is a long narrow little lake. After a further twenty minutes' flight we cross the frontiers of the United States into Maine, which is quite as devoid of signs of human activity and quite as densely wooded as the wildest parts of Canada. There are some mountain peaks here which soar 6000 feet, but I cannot find their names on the map. The sides of the mountains are densely covered with thickets of stunted trees. On the rivers which skirt the bases of

these mountains, thousands of tree trunks float slowly downstream. They have been felled at some place far away in the upper reaches of the rivers, and their transport towards their destination on the bosom of the waters is extremely cheap. The wind comes in squalls along the basins of the rivers and intensifies the tossing of our planes from which we have had no respite since we started.

At 3.24 p.m. we cross First Lake ; at 3.47 p.m. we see another stretch of azure water—Lake Millinocket, nestling among lofty dark mountains. The squadron passes to the right of one of these mountains, which towers to at least 4800 feet, and which also has no name. Next comes a range of summits which gradually are lower and lower. Then the river basins lead first towards gentle uplands, and afterwards again towards hills of from 2100 to 2400 feet. But we keep to our old altitude which permits of an easier flight. And now we are over Megantic, to the north of which is a railway junction of great importance. Many little towns lie beneath us, including the town of Megantic itself. A little further on is the beautiful region of Strand Hill.

Now we are within sight of the River St. Lawrence. The land from this onward is all cultivated, and the huge rectangular green, yellow and black tracts that dot the landscape beneath us, conjure up the picture of a harlequin's cloak. This is the great cereal-producing area of Canada, one of the best-known and most valuable granaries of the world. Montreal is only half an hour's flight from here. At 5.34 we pass right over Lake St. Hilaire. At 5.53 we are skimming along the mighty St. Lawrence River, which a fog had nearly concealed from us, and we are right over Montreal, although we cannot see it. The great Canadian metropolis is buried in a low-lying fog. Indeed, were it not for the mathematical correctness of our instruments, our twenty-four planes might have flown over the huge city without being aware of it.

The Catholic religion has left its impress very strongly on Canada, as is proven by the number of villages which we pass with names such as Sainte Julienne, Saint Lin, Sainte Epiphanie, Sainte Thérèse, Sainte Eustache, Saint

Isidore, Saint Remi, Saint Martin. To the rear of Montreal is "l'Isle Jesus," while the end of the promontory on which the city is built is called Sainte Anne de Bellevue, and the huge bend which the river makes in front of the metropolis is called Lac de Saint Louis.

Religion, like language, is a very reliable criterion for deciding questions of priority of occupation in a conquered country. Both alike denote the origin of the early colonists of that country. The French Canadians always insist on declaring that Canada is French, despite diplomatic treaties and the upshot of old-time and recent wars. And this also explains why the Canadians of New Brunswick and many other regions write and speak a French of bygone days—the French spoken by the early pioneers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Instead of *île*, *maître*, *avait*, *monsieur*, they say *isle*, *maîstre*, *avoit*, *sieur*, etc. In contrast to the bare, unadorned Calvinist, Methodist and Evangelical cathedrals built by the English conquerors, the Canadians of French stock have reared the baroque-gilded, vaulted-arched roofs of the Louis Quatorze period. They have actually erected in the heart of Montreal a miniature Saint Peter's with the Bramante façade, the Michael Angelo dome and the Berinini colonnade. They have also reconstructed in miniature, with ineffable patience, the two blunt towers, the rectangular flanks and the rose window of Notre Dame de Paris.

Meanwhile we are flying over the slate-coloured city. Grey is the predominant note in the houses built after the French pattern. The fine park of La Fontaine, to the north of the city, has been planned on the lines of the Bois de Boulogne in Paris. And then the city is full of churches. It seems almost incredible that there could be so many. Their gables, obelisks, cupolas and steeples are like a forest superimposed on the forest of chimney stacks of the houses beneath them. It is obvious that we are flying over a Catholic city.

Although the harbour of Montreal is over 1000 miles distant from the sea, the biggest Atlantic liners find anchorage in it. Its system of docks, wharves and silos is an amazing sight. An eternal loading and unloading of ocean-going vessels. Tugs darting to and fro. And

then there is the mammoth Victoria Bridge, nearly two English miles in length with its twenty-five enormous pillars embedded in the waters of the river. It was built in 1898-99 by the famous engineer, Joseph Hobson, at a cost of 20,000,000 dollars.

The bridge, the wharves, the squares, the roofs of houses, the terraces, the towers of Montreal and the banks along the river, are crowded with people watching our squadron arriving in splendid formation. Our planes wheel right round in a broad sweep so that they face a head wind, and with a graceful glide, while the roar of our engines tones down into an intermittent droning sound and then dies away, we skim the yellowish waters towards buoys, over which Italian flags are waving.

The stretch of water on which we alight is near the Canadian anchorage of Lonveil. My platoon has made its descent with an easy grace. Our flight, notwithstanding the great area of land covered, the adverse winds and the unnerving persistent tossing, was completed without hitch in four hours at a speed of $120\frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour.

But the joy of having completed my flight successfully is once more, as on other occasions, somewhat marred for me. My plane is barely moored when a huge motor-launch shoots out from the bank of the river and makes straight towards me, while other motor-boats dart from the opposite bank and cross and re-cross one another's path just as the other platoon of the squadron are about to alight. The sirens of the steamers are screaming so loudly that it is difficult for me to make myself heard when I shout at the top of my voice to the men in the motor-boats to cease darting to and fro. And while I am yelling, I see Major Del Ponte, the commander of the base, approaching me in an outsize motor-launch. Just at this very moment two platoons are in the act of alighting, only to find their path obstructed by a boat. An irreparable disaster might have occurred in a moment. Luckily one platoon takes a longish glide before striking the water, and thus flies over the boat that barred its way, while the other platoon dodges the menace just ahead of it by making a very sharp descent.

My blood is nearly frozen in my veins as I look on, and

I am afraid that my language, even though I have the royal precedent of the occasional lapses of Emmanuel II for it, is more fit for the barrack square than for the ears of my hosts on the banks of the St. Lawrence. In short, I tell Del Ponte in rather vitriolic idiom to clear out of the anchorage and to get the other motor-launches to do likewise. But the fellows in the motor-launches, who have not the faintest idea of the menace of swift death to which they are exposing my comrades as well as themselves, pay little heed to my oaths as transmitted via Del Ponte, and are focusing the lenses of a score of cameras on us.

There is a comic side to this incident which we enjoy when the menace is finally past. I had been requested at Shediac to send a few words of greeting to Canada and all North America as soon as I touched the waters of the St. Lawrence, and I agreed to do so. It so happened that Major Del Ponte had aboard his motor-launch an operator belonging to a well-known broadcasting company with his microphone. I don't exactly know all the details of what occurred, but decidedly some of my colourful epithets must have passed irrevocably through the ether as the prelude of my address to Canada. The radio operator, the moment he heard me yelling at Del Ponte, had promptly adjusted his microphone and intercepted my remarks. He thought that I was starting my address.

At Montreal, too, the only persons to disembark are the commanders of the platoons, as the others must attend to the immediate refuelling of the planes. Weather permitting, I propose starting for Chicago in the morning. I am greatly pleased at learning from my secretary that the Duce is very glad that I started right away on yesterday, July 13th, from Cartwright for Shediac, after our flight across the Atlantic on the previous day. Martelli wires me that Mussolini said: "Good old Balbo! He is not scared by the fact that it is the 13th of the month."

The Duce's remark is a tribute to the fact that the Italian squadron can wait with the temporising patience of Fabius Maximus when the weather is adverse, but is

prepared to continue its flight with intervals of a night's sleep between the various stages, if the weather permits. And to-morrow we shall start for Chicago.

We dress with all speed to meet the enormous crowd that is swarming around the banks of the anchorage. We see thousands of arms raised in salutation. I step into the motor-launch with Pellegrini and Longo. Presently we reach the slipway leading to the broad thoroughfare that runs to the city. We find it very difficult to make headway. The crowd threatens to hold us up altogether, and would most certainly do so were it not held in check by the cordons formed by the centuries of Canadian-Italian Blackshirts who are our guard of honour. There are hundreds and hundreds of young men, all Italians by birth and Italian-speaking, who have come to Montreal from the most remote corners of Canada. While they cheer us with frenzied enthusiasm, they protect us from being overwhelmed by the generous, but rather excited, crowd. Our meeting with such a fine body of Fascist youth—there is also a procession of charming little Italian girls, in white shirt blouses and black skirts—touches us very deeply. It is young Italy welcoming us to this foreign land in our sweet mother tongue.

Meanwhile on every side I see the lenses of cameras focused on us, while factory whistles deafen us with their strident welcome, and a Canadian aeroplane drones overhead, as it writes a smoke-scroll across the sky : “ Evviva Italia ! ”

Mr. Alfredo Durandean, the Marine Minister, accompanied by a picket of marines who present arms, delivers an address in which he praises our enterprise. In my reply I thank the people of Canada for having appreciated at its full value the mission of civilisation, peace, international brotherhood and mutual support on which the Italian Air Force is engaged, and I declare that it would have been impossible for our squadron to carry out its great undertaking were it not for the support of our great leader, Mussolini, who inspires his airmen to emulate the pioneering spirit of the navigators of the Renaissance.

At length we get as far as the motor-cars awaiting us. And now we see for the first time a practical illustration

of American resourcefulness in coping with traffic problems. A body of policemen on motor-cycles are opening a passage for us by riding abreast a little way ahead of our cars, and keeping up an infernal and eternal din with their klaxons. It is undoubtedly a very effective way of clearing the way for us at the moment, but it is a still more effective way of creating a hopeless traffic jam about half a mile ahead.

While the tide of humanity blocking the streets is steadily swept forward by our police vanguard, the sidewalks are packed with cheering people. To get to the hotel we drive over the splendid Victoria Bridge and through Montreal's dockland. It takes us about an hour to get to Mount Royal Hotel, which, so its director assures me, is the biggest hotel in the British dominions.

The foyer and corridors of the hotel are packed with people. It looks as though all Montreal is trying to squeeze itself into the building. The director, a genial little man of indeterminate nationality and still more indeterminate Italian, with moustaches tapering to a point, mops his perspiring face as he wedges a lane-way for us through the invaders. At length I reach the suite reserved for me. But even now I cannot get a minute's repose. Leading representatives of the Canadian and Italian interests in Montreal, with a rearguard of microphone operators and camera-men, follow in my wake. After a few minutes the Italian consul accompanies me to the monument to the victims of the Great War, at the base of which I place a wreath in the name of the squadron.

After this I go to the Municipal Hall, where tributes are paid to our country and to the Italian Air Force by leading Canadians. The Italian consul replies on behalf of Italy. When this ceremony is over I am looking forward to a brief spell of rest at the hotel. I am utterly exhausted, and long for a bath and a sleep. But it had been written that my real trouble was to commence when I alighted in the St. Lawrence River. Mount Royal Hotel is literally besieged by cheering multitudes who seem determined to stick it out for the whole night. My suite too, has been overrun by all and sundry. Luckily I happen upon a kindly Sicilian Fascist among the throng,

who is able to speak English perfectly, and ask him to act as my master of ceremonies, so to speak. By tactfully appealing to my rather importunate admirers he succeeded in getting them out of my bedroom, though they still take possession of the rest of my suite.

I give a sigh of relief at the prospect of a brief spell of rest, when the director of the hotel pops into my room, and tells me that the representatives of the Montreal press are waiting to see me. My improvised master of ceremonies, Signor Russo, keeps the journalists at bay for a few minutes, as I decide to receive them in the bathroom while I am in the hands of an impressive-looking barber. This rather unconventional behaviour establishes a link of goodfellowship between the pressmen and myself. These Canadian journalists have a sense of humour, and a breezy interchange of question and answer is proceeding merrily, when I notice that more and more journalists are being ushered into the bathroom. I decide that this won't do, and the journalists, the barber and myself move to the dining-room in the hotel. Like all trans-Atlantic reporters, these jolly fellows are not satisfied with finding out my views about aviation, politics and economics. With genial camaraderie they alternately ask me the most silly questions about my hobbies and try to probe into the very recesses of my soul. Then finding their efforts futile either to get a concise autobiography from me or to psycho-analyse me, they shoot all kinds of funny questions at me. "Why do you wear a beard, General Balbo?" is just a sample of their droll queries.

The interview evolves more and more into good-humoured banter on both sides. The honours are equally divided in these interchanges, which are stimulated by some excellent cocktails. Eventually I gravely ask how many journalists there are in Montreal. I am informed that there is a very large number. "What a pity!" I comment, still with an air of mock solemnity. "Would it not be a good idea to melt the whole lot down, and make one really first-class one out of the bunch?" My remark was greeted with roars of laughter from my journalist friends. Just at this moment the telephone rings. It is the Rome call which I had asked for a short

time ago. I am rather glad that the journalists are present while I am talking to the Duce, and so are they. Once more Mussolini congratulates me on the successful completion of a further stage of our flight, and asks for a detailed account of various parts of our journey—especially the trans-Atlantic stretch. He inquires very cordially about my comrades, and is delighted to hear that I expect to reach Chicago to-morrow.

The barber finishes his job which the telephone call had interrupted. My journalist friends put their notebooks in their pockets, and a very enjoyable interlude ends with cordial hand-shaking all round.

A little later my comrades and myself are the guests of honour at a grand banquet given by the Italian colony in the great dining-hall on the eighteenth storey of the hotel. My boys look very elegant in their white uniforms, and the women's dresses are exquisitely beautiful. After the banquet I look on for about an hour or so at the others dancing, and it gives me great pleasure to see them let themselves go with such gay abandon. This spell of relaxation will do them good after the strain which they have endured ever since they left Reykjavik.

Well, I have to-morrow's flight before me, and so, as I feel absolutely played out, I shall go to bed. Before doing so, however, I shall instruct Longo to insist on all the boys being in bed by midnight. They will need sleep in order to be fresh at dawn.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AIR ARMADA IN CHICAGO

JULY 15th. Our theoretical journey to-day is 906 miles, but it will work out in practice at over 1060 miles, covered in a flight of something between seven and eight hours. Our normal human freight is increased to-day by some hundreds of pounds. I was just about to embark at 12.30 p.m. by Greenwich time, when Augusto Rosso, the Italian ambassador at Washington, one of the youngest men in our diplomatic service, to whom I had promised this trip months ago, turned up at the anchorage. I wired to him yesterday that I would be delighted to fulfil my promise, and he took me at my word. Later on when we arrived at Chicago after a long flight, during which our machine tossed in a manner calculated to damp the ardour of a novice airman, the ambassador assured me that he was not in the least tired.

Our other guest is the Air Attaché at Washington, Lieutenant-Colonel Sbernadori, who is going on Biseo's plane. In addition to my usual crew, I am taking aboard with me the ambassador, my nephew and Signor Nello Quillici. My guests have constituted themselves into a sort of flying secretariat, and are rattling away in turns on the typewriter in the hull on the right all through the journey. All told, there are eight people aboard the I-Balb.

With 4,532 lbs. of petrol, 33 lbs. of oil, 1,100 lbs. of various equipment and 1,320 lbs. of human freight, we must be carrying through the skies something over three and one-fifth tons.

With the help of God, despite the exasperating delays before we left Orbetello, the squadron should reach Chicago to-day. As that city is the last stage of our

outward journey, the exact division of the month is a good omen. We hope that we shall all be in Rome within the course of the second half of the month.

The weather to-day is not very promising. We shall be facing a head-wind practically all the time. Furthermore, according to the reports, we shall encounter fierce squalls at various stages of our journey. But that won't keep us one extra hour at Montreal. No doubt our hospitable Canadian friends, and especially the Italian colony, whose guests we were yesterday, are hoping that the weather will hold us up for another day.

At the landing-stage I say good-bye to the municipal authorities and to my fellow-countrymen, and presently I am on my plane, which skims along the grey waters and takes off with the greatest ease. Unfortunately the other machines are not so lucky, as they are hampered by the steady stream of traffic to and fro on the river. Of course, this cannot be helped. Most of these vessels are little mail-boats with a fixed schedule of hours of arrival and departure. The result is that practically an hour is wasted in taking off, and the platoons are eventually at a great distance apart.

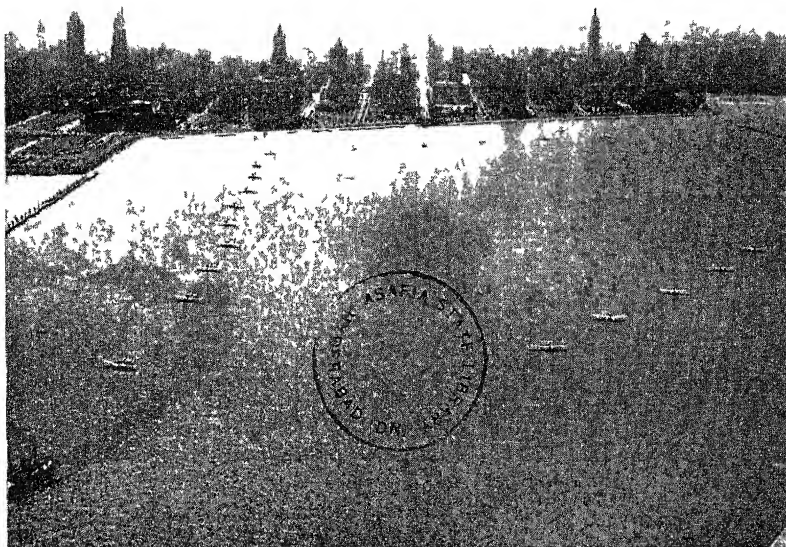
After the usual farewell flight round the city I start off at right angles from my base and go straight ahead, proceeding upstream again along the St. Lawrence. There is much fog, a limited visibility, and a moderate head-wind. It is hot.

The banks of the St. Lawrence seem to come closer and closer together as we climb. When the fog permits it, we get a magnificent view of the vast stretches of forest land, so characteristic of the Canadian landscape, while every now and then there are broad gaps in the woods, and the earth assumes yellow and brownish tints. These are the areas from which the corn has been harvested some weeks ago. Next comes a great green belt of prairie, followed after some miles by the dark green woods once more. The river splits up into a number of streams, intersected with a lot of tiny islands. After a while these streams converge together once more into one mighty torrent.

At 3.55 p m, we fly over Hamilton Island, a square,



THE ARMADA FLIES OVER THE CHICAGO EXHIBITION



THE FLYING BOATS ANCHORED AT CHICAGO
 MAJOR KELLY OF CHICAGO PRESENTS BALBO WITH THE SYMBOLICAL KEYS
 OF THE CITY

flat and grey-tinted patch. At 4.27 p.m., we are looking down on the beautiful little town of Prescott, a junction for river and lake steamers. And just a little way ahead we see the blue outline of Lake Ontario, with low, menacing clouds brooding over it. We are now over Kingston, which is practically on the verge of the lake. Although it has only 23,000 inhabitants, it is one of the most interesting towns in North America, and is rich in historical associations. The tower of Fort Henry, which overlooks the town, was the last stronghold of the French in Canada in their fierce struggle with the British for the possession of this vast and valuable territory. Until 1812 the town was called Fort Frontenac, after its founder, Count de Frontenac. It was here that under the eye of De La Salle, one of the greatest explorers in history, the first ship to sail across Lake Ontario was built. The name Kingston was later given to the town when it fell into the hands of the British after an heroic defence. The men who rebaptised the town were the irreconcilable monarchist New Englanders who went into exile at the end of the American War of Independence.

I am suddenly aroused from my reverie about Canadian pioneers when a telegram is handed to me from Colonel Infante, who is picking up in New York the meteorological reports of the United States and forwarding them to me by radio. He informs me that a terrific storm is raging on Lake Erie over which our route lies. This means that we are due to run right into it, almost immediately after we have crossed Lake Ontario, i.e. in less than an hour. The New York meteorological office advises us to change our route to a line 60 miles further north.

Changing our route is tantamount to a leap in the dark, as it will mean flying over territory which we do not know and of which we have not even got a map. Still, no choice is left to us ; we must get outside the zone of the storm. I inform the crews about our change of route, and give instructions to fly in a northerly direction over Nottawasaga Bay. We shall go afterwards over Detroit, along the Hudson, and resume the route to Toledo.

Immediately I get replies from the different platoons acknowledging the receipt of my instructions, with the exception of the I-Long platoon. Apparently my message did not reach this one. It seems pretty certain that it followed up the route previously arranged.

At 6.40 p.m., I got confirmation of the fact that Lieutenant-Colonel Longo eventually received my message, and that by a stroke of good luck he had reached Lake Erie when the storm had already passed. I ask him to meet us at Detroit at 8.10 p.m.

Meanwhile, I continue with the other seven squadrons along the trajectory of the great arc which I had planned, and swerve towards the north. Unfortunately the maps we have do not give us sufficiently detailed information. We can only pick out a few landmarks of outstanding importance. We are right over the frontier between Canada and the United States, a region completely uninhabited and producing nothing but stunted timber. After the lapse of about an hour we are flying at a height of 300 feet above Lake Stomy; twenty minutes later we are soaring over Rosedale Lake, and a little later again we are crossing over Victoria Harbour, in squally weather, while the overcast sky envelops us in a blanket of fog.

To our left lamps are gleaming, while over our heads storm clouds are scurrying in a menacing manner. We are still skirting the circumference of the cyclone belt by making a great semicircular sweep. And now here we are flying over Collingwood at a height of 4500 feet in quest of air that we can breathe with greater ease. Port Elgin next comes in sight. We have rounded the northern angle of Lake Huron in our flight over Georgian Bay. Now we approach the most southerly point of the same lake in the direction of Port Huron. The right bank along which we are flying is low and flat. At many points the lake over spills its boundaries, and assumes the appearance of a dreary swamp of seemingly illimitable dimensions which merges into the foggy sky.

At 7.48 p.m., we are over Port Huron, the first city in the United States that we meet to-day on our route. On the very frontier line of Canadian territory, and

separated from its rival city by a little stream, is the Canadian port of Sarnia. We cut right overhead to Detroit, which is now only some 30 miles off. We have barely entered American territory when we see a group of chaser aeroplanes flying at a greater altitude than ourselves. This is the first salute accorded to us by the Air Force of the United States. On board one of the planes that have come to welcome us is General Parker, the commander of the Northern Frontier American Army. According to what he told me afterwards at Chicago, General Parker also sent me a message of greeting, which I very much regret never reached me.

As we approach Detroit, there are more American planes advancing to give us an escort of honour. Civil aviation machines are also joining in the generous tribute given to us by the American Air Force.

We are cutting right over the imposing city of Detroit which I know so well. It is the most important centre in the world for the motor-car industry. We are at a height of 4500 feet. The atmosphere is very disturbed by the thermic currents ascending from the city.

We see beneath us the chess-board patters, symmetrically designed to a millimetre, formed by the long straight streets, intersecting one another at right angles, and islanding blocks of houses of precisely uniform pattern and dimensions. To the west of the city is the industrial area, with a thousand smokestacks thrusting skywards and an archipelago of factories, from whose windows shafts of dazzling light radiate. Once more I see the famous Ford factories. A sooty cloud hangs over the city like a pall. It is a veritable kingdom of Vulcan, a realm of metal and fire. There are miles and miles of factories, intersected with a gleaming labyrinth of railway tracks. This is America with its mammoth mass-production factories, its colossal machinery, and its myriads of workmen all hammered into a uniform mould. From this city the cars are sent throughout the whole world that bring man along the highways of insatiable curiosity, of insatiable greed, and of a still more insatiable craving for speed.

The whole squadron is now moving in close formation

in the wake of my platoon. On looking back I see the red and the white triangular formations lining up, while Longo's green platoon is in its post at the rear. And so we can go ahead to Chicago with our minds quite at rest.

We cut across an angle of Lake Erie from Windsor to Toledo. All these stretches of water seem to be of uniform pattern, just like all the landscape around. Toledo, however, which we fly over at 8.36 p.m., is slightly more elevated, being about 500 feet above the sea-level. Perhaps it was owing to its relative altitude over the rest of the region that it got its romantic name—a name conjuring up associations with the chivalrous Cid Campeador of distant Spain.

There are some 250 miles ahead of us now over a rather monotonous tableland which stands about 250 feet above the level of the sea. We proceed along the banks of the River Maumee, which is probably broad enough to afford us anchorage in case of a forced descent, although at this season its level is very low. The city of Fort Wayne, a typically American one, with 100,000 inhabitants, is built at the confluence of three insignificant streams. Next we fly over some very tiny lakes dotted over a semi-cultivated, semi-prairie region with monotonous contours.

Our machines continue tossing all the time—an exhausting and nerve-wearing phenomenon to which I can never get accustomed. And now as a result of having been so many hours in the air we are all rather exhausted on this fourth day of persistent strenuous work.

We are getting rather tired of this dreary monotonous landscape, and our eyes scan the horizon in the direction of the shores of the last lake we have to traverse. At length we see a bluish streak, at first rather hazy, but presently assuming more definite shape, along the horizon. It is the southern shore of Lake Michigan. We are now right over New Buffalo and within 37 miles of Chicago. It is 10.10 a.m. The sky is streaked with cumulous clouds. The air is very hazy all around, with visibility of twelve and a half miles.

We take a wide sweep to the left along the shore of the lake, and are presently over Michigan City. I now start to descend in wide spiral movements, while there are further demonstrations on a grander scale by American planes, some of which carry out very spectacular mass evolutions. Giordano's platoon, which is in the rear of the squadron, is three minutes behind time. I send out the radio message: "Line up in close formation. I am making straight for Chicago. Height 1500 feet. The commanders who are behind time will please hurry up. The last platoon to anchor will be the I-Gior. When all have anchored and the engines are hooded, the flag is to be hoisted. The commanders are to embark on the *Wilmette* with all their crews."

It is only fair, now that the opportunity presents itself, that the second pilots, the wireless operators and the mechanics, should enjoy their hour of triumph too, when the squadron is about to reach its destination.

We see already the first indications of our approach to the great industrial city on the banks of Lake Michigan. All the way from Michigan City to Chicago we see huge naphtha depots, gigantic white reservoirs and mighty oil-wells. We are flying over the frontiers of the realm of mammoth industry whose capital is Chicago. And on the asphalt roads stretching like rivers of lava towards Chicago, we see the first colossal processions of motor-cars, column after column in quest of a gap in the congested traffic in order to be in time to see us arrive. Afterwards the motor-cars are side-tracked into the huge improvised parks. We see on the outskirts of the city compact masses of uniform lines—one car close behind the other, and all so densely packed, so black, and so tiny as seen from above that they look like immense armies of ants. The banks of the lake, as far as the eye can reach, are black with cars, and as we pass over the suburbs of the city, all the streets and all the squares seem in the throes of a traffic-jam. How many thousands of people must be swarming to Chicago, and how many, in addition to its own 6,000,000 inhabitants, must be converging upon its streets, which are now beginning to spread out beneath us like huge check patterns!

Hugging the bank of the lake all the time we reach the grounds of the Chicago Exhibition, with big American and Italian flags flying from its steel towers. That circular structure stretching out into the lake and packed with people, is Navy Pier. Close to it is anchored a war-ship, also crowded with spectators. But the most impressive spectacle is the unbroken line of densely packed humanity along the coast for some thirty miles. There must be millions of people on these roads. And the tentacles of this mighty crowd stretch out towards the roofs of the houses, and work their way towards the topmost stories of the sky-scrapers.

Michigan Avenue, a great artery, divides the city in two. Starting at the green banks of the lake, it runs amid towers and steeples and giant sky-scrapers, cuts across hundreds of streets, and past immense squares, to disappear far away in the heart of the mysterious metropolis. I distinctly recollect this mighty street, one of the finest in the world, through which I drove in 1929. I remember that at its end the harbour spreads out like a flower on its stem. In those days I was day-dreaming of an aerial expedition to Chicago with Lake Michigan as my anchorage.

The rectangular stretch of water through which our machines must pass in order to anchor, is small and narrow, but the difficulty of negotiating it will only prove the mettle of our pilots. Leading the 24 planes in a circular course over the city at a low altitude, like a flight of silvery birds, and gliding between the towers of the Exhibition and over the fearsome zig-zag roofs of the sky-scrapers, I give the signal to descend slowly. My platoon then makes towards the anchorage, flies over the surface for a few yards, then skims the tops of the waves churned up by a thousand vessels, and comes to rest on the clear waters of the lake. One by one, and without a hitch, the platoons alight. It is now 11 p.m. Greenwich time and 6 p.m. by local time.

Now that the sky is clear, it is invaded by the American planes. A squadron of 43 machines carries out graceful mass manœuvres, wing to wing. After some wonderful preliminary gyrations, the planes deploy so as to form

the word "Italia" against the sky. Afterwards they fly far apart, then close up again, and line up in geometrical patterns. After this they perform the most brilliant and daring stunts. The huge dirigible, Macon, which has come specially from Lakehurst to greet us, drops gradually to an altitude of 900 feet, and flies over our squadron at a very slow rate. Other dirigibles, which have been launched over Chicago and its mighty lakes by numerous commercial firms, like Goodyears, cruise along and in their wake a scroll floats against the sky which runs: "Hail, Balbo and sons of great Italy!"

Meanwhile, the warship *Wilmette* is firing salvos of welcome, and the factory sirens are shrieking in time. The klaxons of the millions of motor-cars are making an infernal din, while the crowd waves flags and handkerchiefs. Numerous loud-speakers describe the various phases of our alighting and scatter the news of our arrival all over America. Before we had anchored cameramen in aeroplanes hovered around us; now a fleet of motor-launches with more press-photographers is surrounding my machine, from which I watch the last of the platoons mooring. The waters of the lake are boiling with the comical darting to and fro of the pressmen's boats as they manœuvre for points of vantage.

A man with a microphone aboard his craft begs me to deliver an address; he is joined by a chorus of others, who appeal to me in wooden and weirdly pronounced Italian phrases, obviously laboriously committed to memory for the occasion. I must make some effort to comply with their request; and so I shout "God save America! God save Italy!" But as my voice is not of stentorian compass, I don't know whether my pious aspirations ever reached them above the appalling din of a multitude of mechanical noises blended with the delirious acclamations of the people. The pressmen chorus their thanks for my greeting and implore me to continue. However, I decide that the time for speech-making will come later on, and that our main purpose at the moment is to get ashore.

Unfortunately, we have a little trouble at our Chicago anchorage just as we had at Montreal. As Colonel

Tempesti, the commander of the base, comes charging along the lake in his sharp-prowed motor-launch to take us ashore, he runs into the stern of my plane. After several unsuccessful attempts he manages at last to get his craft alongside us. I step into his boat along with the Italian ambassador and the rest of the crew. There is no room for my nephew and the suitcases in the boat : so Colonel Tempesti decides that he will put me ashore first and make another trip of it. But when he returns the lake is even more rough with the backwash of traffic, which makes the task of getting his boat alongside more difficult.

To make matters worse the steersman does not know Italian, while Tempesti's English is negligible, with the result that at the critical moment the boat backs away instead of coming forward, and my nephew who has one leg in each craft, falls into the lake. Tempesti, immaculate in his elegant uniform, straightway takes a header into the lake to rescue my nephew who is, incidentally, an excellent swimmer. They both clamber aboard the motor-launch, and a few minutes later they step ashore, looking like a couple of drenched hens.

Trivial mishaps such as this might have been avoided, if, instead of a motor-launch, a rowing-boat had gone to fetch us ashore, but it appears that in the capital of mechanised civilisation, and in fact anywhere on the shores of the mighty Lake Michigan, it is impossible to find a single rowing-boat.

Meanwhile I go aboard the *Wilmette*, which is gaily decked with flags. The marines aboard present arms. The commandant introduces me to the representatives of the Federal Government, the governor of the State of Illinois, the corporation of Chicago, and the members of the committee of the Exhibition, as well as to the leading admirals, generals and the air force commanders of the United States Forces. I am also introduced to American businessmen and to members of the Italian colony in Chicago, including their genial chief, Consul-General Construccio.

I bow again and again to the crowd that lines the banks of the lake, and we set out for the Exhibition in

motor-launches, to avoid being held up by the cheering multitudes in the streets. In the boat with me are Prince Potenziani, the Italian commissioner for the Exhibition, Senator Guglielmi, who has come from Rome on a trip, and representatives of the municipal authorities. Escorted by a flotilla of genuine Venetian gondolas, we soon reach the Exhibition area.

An enormous crowd awaits us at the landing-stage. I step into the first of a long procession of motor-cars, while my comrades are distributed among the fifty cars in my rear. After a slow drive among the pavilions and along the park, the procession reaches the Palace of Science, where the representatives of all the Italian societies in Chicago and a group of Black Shirts are assembled. Our motor-cars then resume their route, headed by eight huge tricolour flags, and by the band of the "Black Horses," the cavalry regiment of the national guard in the picturesque uniform of a hundred years ago, and we arrive at the "Soldier's Field." Here at least 100,000 people are packed on the slopes, and quite as many more are outside.

We get a tremendous ovation on our arrival, and I take my seat on the grand-stand in the stadium with the mayor and the Governor of Illinois. The stadium is magnificently illuminated with magnesium lamps. The Italian aviators are seated in the first rows in front of the grand-stand. Fifteen Italian-American girls, dressed as young Fascists, throw bouquets of flowers. Among those present are 250 veterans who fought on the Italian front during the World War.

Loud-speakers announce the names of the numerous representative men in their order who are to give addresses of welcome to the Italian squadron. The first speeches are delivered by Governor Horner and the representatives of the Federal Government, who bid us welcome in the name of President Roosevelt. In my brief reply, I state that I am very proud to have fulfilled the Duce's command by leading to Chicago young men who are a living testimony to the glory of the new Italy. Ambassador Rosso translates my words into perfect English, and the loud-speakers transmit them distinctly to all those

present. Another wild outburst of cheering like the roar of a tempestuous sea, greets the hundred Italian fliers, whose white uniforms are strongly outlined against the sombre garb of the crowd.

Our task is to get as best we can from Soldiers' Field to the Drake Hotel without being overwhelmed by the exuberant glee of the Americans. We are escorted through the city by a guard of honour selected from the Black Horse Regiment.

We are very tired when we arrive at the hotel, only to find that the women of Chicago have arranged a banquet for us. We must accept their gracious invitation, of course, although even as matters stand, we have crammed a five days' programme of Chicago fixtures into three. The banquet is followed by a dance, and my lads enjoy themselves thoroughly until well into the small hours.

The Chicago police authorities place a couple of their plain-clothes men in the corridor outside my suite in the Drake Hotel—typical American police, of Neapolitan birth. We become fast friends within a few minutes.

The morning of July 16th starts with four official visits, the first to Mr. Harry New, the government commissioner of the World Exhibition, the second to Mr. Harry Horner, the Governor of the State of Illinois, the third to Mayor Kelly, of Chicago, and the fourth to the president of the Exhibition. Luckily, I find them all very congenial and unconstrained in conversation—men whose very demeanour is soothing and restful. After a quarter of an hour's chat with them one feels that all barriers of race and tongue are removed. They love their own great country, but they have a great admiration for Mussolini's Italy. In fact, the prestige of the Duce in America stands very high. It is a prestige of gradual and progressive growth. It developed *pari passu* with the sloughing of the prejudices against the new methods of government imposed on Italy by Fascism. Nothing succeeds like success, and the success of Mussolini's experiment has won over even its most embittered critics in America. The ten years of the Fascist regime speak for themselves. Americans see the

victories that have been achieved by the Duce in his manifold phases of activity.

An intelligent American can easily visualise the contrast between old Italy and the Italy of to-day. Up to ten years ago wretched hordes of illiterate Italian immigrants had kept steadily pouring into America for many decades as unskilled labourers. Chicago's climate is so inclement in winter that the casual toilers drawn from primitive regions in Asia or Africa, or descended from ancestors who came from these regions, could not stand it. It was absolutely uninhabitable for the negroes, who died like flies with the first frost of November. It was then that the Italians took up the rough work for which the saddle-nosed races were unfitted in such a trying clime. It was then that in their rude roles as hod-carriers, brick-layers, ploughmen and miners they contributed their part towards the phenomenal development that raised America within the short span of thirty years to her proud position as the most prosperous nation in the world. You found Italians delving in the mines, building the railways, breaking up the prairies, toiling at the petroleum wells, in the tinned-meat factories, and constructing mammoth harbours and sky-scrapers.

But now things are changed. Italy is no longer anxious to send her children outside her boundaries. She lets them go when their characters are developed, when they know definitely the type of work they are fitted to do and when they are able to read and write. The result is a process of natural selection. Even those who have been thirty years in America, the survivors of the hecatombs that followed in the wake of intensive emigration, gain the benefit of the protection which Rome extends to the recent arrivals. The Italian colony is growing in prestige, even if it is dwindling numerically. Furthermore, the fame of Mussolini has impressed the Italian Americans; in a world of chaos, a world that was a prey to post-war hysteria, and that was threatened by Bolshevik upheavals, they find guidance in the light that shines from Rome. And to-day he sends to the new world, a hundred Italians who break down the barriers

of the ocean, and tell the people struggling for existence on both sides of the Atlantic that the world is small, and that the genius of man can develop the sense of brotherhood between the nations and help in the difficult task of universal co-operation in the cause of human progress.

Our Rome, whose origin dates back thousands of years, has established by the flight of the Italian armada across the ocean, eternal bonds of sympathy and comradeship with the young city which a hundred years ago was a little town among the prairies that skirts the banks of Lake Michigan.

The first people to realise the significance of our flight are the Italian toilers in America, who have assembled in their thousands to greet us on our arrival. Not that the Americans in general did not also comprehend the purport of our enterprise. We have abundant proof of their attitude towards us in the speeches of the official representatives of the governments of the various states, and in the spontaneous demonstrations of popular enthusiasm in which the names of Italy and America are continuously associated.

All the members of the corporation are with Mayor Kelly at the reception at the Municipal Hall. The Postmaster-General of the United States is also there. In the course of the reception the mayor of Chicago presents me with a symbolical gold key of the city. In the speech that accompanies his gift he says that the key will remind us that we have found on our arrival at Lake Michigan, the path to the hearts of the citizens of the metropolis, which has become a second country for us.

I am deeply touched by his gift, and assure him that the sentiments which he has expressed are very warmly appreciated by us.

At 11 a.m. I summon all the crews to a meeting in the Drake Hotel. It is the first time that we have all met in absolute privacy since our arrival. The eyes of the white-uniformed lads around me glow with pride, and their lips tremble with emotion when I congratulate them on the skill, endurance and discipline which they have displayed all along during our flight, and I convey

to them the message of thanks which the Duce has commissioned me to give them.

We have received to-day from the Holy Father a valuable tribute to the great moral value of our flight. Our enterprise is warmly praised and blessed by his Holiness the Pope, the greatest spiritual authority in the world, who holds sway over the empire of the consciences of the faithful, an empire which knows neither frontiers, nor barriers of race, tongue or culture.

A little before noon, at the head of all the crews, I attend High Mass in the Church of the Holy Name, which is the Catholic cathedral of Chicago. We are accompanied by the Italian Ambassador, Signor Augusto Rosso, the Consul, Signor Giuseppe Castruccio, and the leading representatives of the Italian colony. Enormous crowds fill every vacant spot in the cathedral, while those who cannot get admission, fill the open space in front of the edifice, and effectively block up the main entrance.

After the chanting of the solemn *Te Deum* to thank the Almighty for the protection He gave us in our flight over the ocean, Cardinal Mundelein sends an acolyte to me with the following telegram, which he has received from Cardinal Pacelli :

“ Please convey to General Balbo and his companions the congratulations of the Holy Father and his blessing. The Holy Father prays that the help of the Most High which he has invoked from the moment of their departure may be with the ocean-fliers until their safe return home. CARDINAL PACELLI.”

Father Hast, the military chaplain, who preaches during the mass, explains the significance of the Holy Father's telegram, and extols Italy, which he says is being led from triumph to triumph by Mussolini.

Telegrams arrive in thousands, and are piled up in stacks on the tables in the improvised office in a room adjoining my suite. Among the first to arrive are messages of congratulation from the King and the royal family.

To-day, at 1 p.m., Commissioner-General New invites the squadron to lunch in the central restaurant of the

Exhibition. Immediately afterwards we make a tour of the pavilions, starting with the Italian palace. The Exhibition is closed to the public during our visit, in order to give us a chance of moving around with greater ease. The departments devoted to mechanics naturally attract special attention. All kinds of engines from the most powerful to the tiniest are displayed before our eyes. The century of progress, of which the World Exhibition celebrates the apotheosis, is in reality the mechanical century.

During our visit to the Italian pavilion, I make a speech before the microphone which is broadcast to the whole world. I take the opportunity to explain more clearly the significance and the aim of the Italian squadron's trans-Atlantic flight. Italy, I point out, is a poor country which would not waste millions of lira on an attempt which was merely of a sporting or sensational nature. I contend that our enterprise belongs to the category of flights undertaken by massed formations of machines, a type of flight which for years Italy has considered of vital importance for the technical development of modern aviation. The North Atlantic was chosen instead of the Mediterranean, I add, firstly, because the venture will contribute to the knowledge of a route which may become a beaten track, so to speak, for the great inter-continental communications, but secondly, because, in the tenth year of the Revolution, Italy was anxious to convey a message of comradeship to the great American nation. My words arouse great enthusiasm.

In the evening 5000 guests are present at a colossal banquet in the Stevenson Hotel. An Italian-American committee, presided over by our fellow-countryman, Judge Sharbaro, and the ex-ambassador of the United States at Rome, Mr. Child, has been making plans for this banquet for several months. Among the guests is Signor Augusto Rosso, the Italian ambassador at Washington.

An immense hall with a small railed gallery running right round it, accommodates this extraordinary assembly. Between the flags of Italy and America plaques of the King of Italy and of Mussolini stand out in white

against a black background. As we enter, the guests cheer wildly, while thousands of arms are outstretched in the Fascist salute. The band of the Chicago Opera House renders American and Italian airs. I am rather taken unawares by one of the after-dinner speeches. It is delivered by the Rev. Robert G. Kelly, the rector of the Catholic university of Chicago, who informs me that the faculty of science has conferred on me a doctor's degree, *honoris causa*. After his address he presents me with a doctor's gown in violet and blue colours.

The following message from President Roosevelt is read for me by Mr. Child :

“ I request that you will express to General Balbo and his gallant companions my profound admiration and my sincere congratulations upon the triumphal success of their trans-Atlantic flight. This enterprise, which has upon it the stamp of a thorough scientific preparation, marks an important step in the progress of the conquest of the air. Please convey to them my greetings. ROOSEVELT.”

After a speech by Child himself and by the Italian ambassador, who speaks in English and Italian, I say a few words. But before doing so I call the roll of the crews of the whole squadron, commencing with the name of Sergeant Quintavalle, who was killed at Amsterdam. All the members of the squadron answer for him in unison, and the public re-echoes their answer. Then, one by one, the names of all my comrades are called out. Each man, as his name is called, stands up, and all eyes are turned upon him amidst loud cheers. After the last man has stood up, I tell my audience that I am proud to have led the aerial armada. I pass in review the work done by Mussolini to inspire the Italian nation with a consciousness of its moral worth and to inaugurate in the world an era of friendly international relations. I remind my audience of the achievement of generations of Italians, who to-day form a prosperous and noble colony in the great metropolis of Chicago, and I assert that my fellow-countrymen resident in America should be proud to call themselves Italians.

My listeners thrill with emotion as I recount the early stages of Italian emigration and the sufferings endured by the wretched toilers, who frequently landed in America penniless, but full of the indomitable courage of their race. In fact, four-fifths of the Italians listening to me had actually endured such a painful pilgrimage before they secured work in America.

At the end of the banquet, the biggest at which I have ever been present, and which closes with another rendering by the audience of "Giovinezza," and the "Song of the Po," I am presented with a little silver statue of an angel with outspread arms, symbolising Italy hovering above the twenty-four planes.

The programme of the first day has been rather exhausting. The programme of July 17th is still more so. It takes great endurance to face, one after another, the round of receptions that have been staged for us.

To start, we pay a visit to the great municipal airport, which is a junction for numerous Canadian and American air-lines. Needless to say, the wonderful American system of organisation, especially with regard to air-mails, interests us immensely. I note that in America great importance is attached to the question of speed, which in my view, too, is the most important factor in civil aviation. There is a line from New York to Chicago which does the journey in less than four hours—its average is three hours and fifty minutes. The company gets no direct assistance from the Government, but it has the contract for the mails from which it derives a fairly substantial subsidy. The enormous distances to be traversed makes aerial transport more important from a practical point of view. Moreover, the level nature of the ground for the most part throughout the United States makes for the success of aerial communication which has now become an integral factor in the daily routine of American civilisation.

At 11 a.m. there is a unique ceremonial—the naming of a great street in Chicago after me. I am indeed proud of the honour, not so much for my own sake as for that of the Italian Air Force. It will keep the memory of the aerial achievement of Italy during the tenth year of the

Revolution constantly before the eyes of the people of Chicago. The christening of the Seventh Street by the title "General Balbo Avenue" is a very simple affair. The shield on which the new name is inscribed is unveiled. General Balbo Avenue is a great artery which links up the most densely populated quarters of the lower part of the city, which is the very heart of the industrial area, with the parks and the gardens abutting on the World Exhibition. It is a long street, and bisects a large area of the city. It had previously been announced by Mayor Kelly, at the great meeting at the stadium, that July 15th would be proclaimed "Italo Balbo's Day," and that it would be celebrated throughout the whole state.

I next pay a visit with all my boys to the unfinished monument to Christopher Columbus which has been offered by the Italian colony to the city of Chicago. On the plinth of the statue to the great Genoese navigator, is an inscription recording the arrival of the air armada at Chicago. The Italian colony has assembled on the big square named after Columbus, and hails our arrival with the wildest enthusiasm.

In the afternoon I take part in the most unique of the many ceremonials that I witnessed in Chicago. The Indians of the Sioux tribe, who are encamped near the area of the Exhibition, wish to confer on me the high rank of an Indian chief. The last person to receive this honour was President Coolidge. Well, it has added a colourful touch to our adventure. When I arrive at the Exhibition grounds, the tribe is drawn up in circular formation around the wigwams, with the women in sky-blue tunics and very long black hair hanging over their shoulders, the men wearing a multi-coloured feather head-dress, and for the most part wrapped in brilliantly coloured blankets. Some of the men, naked to the waist and with their skin tattooed with weird geometrical patterns, advance towards me, swaying in a rhythmic dance. Then the drums start to beat frenziedly, while other Indians, armed with long bows, and their head-gear tossing wildly, go through a strange fantasia which they call the "dog's dance."

In the midst of this motley throng stands the great

chief, immobile as a statue, and with a stuffed dog at his feet. And now another chief advances, a solemn-looking veteran, called "Evergreen Tree." He asks men, women and children to form a ring, and dance the "eagle dance." They do as they are bid, and leaping in crazy gyrations, close in round him in ever-narrowing circles, while he rattles off some unintelligible cabalistic invocations. Then Evergreen Tree advances towards me, takes me by the hand, admits me into the circle, and places an enormous crown of variegated feathers on my head, while other incantations are chanted in accordance with the weird ritual of the Sioux Indians. And the ceremonial ends by Chief Evergreen Tree conferring on me with great solemnity the title of "Chief Flying Eagle."

Then the whole tribe advances, encircles me and does homage to me. The solemn matrons, with their high cheek bones and their dark beady eyes, bow respectfully to me. The little ones with feathered head-dresses bigger than themselves gambol around. The men glide past me, dancing with frenzied gyrations, whose tempo seems momentarily to increase while they swing gleaming hatchets from hand to hand with lightning speed. The great chief "Black Thorn," more statuesque and immobile than ever, towers above the tallest of his crazily capering subjects with his great aquiline nose in the air, and buried in gloomy introspection, gazes away into space.

The great ceremonial was photographed and filmed in a thousand poses. The "pale faces," needless to say, were more amused than impressed by the scene. As for myself, I did my best to keep a straight face and to pretend to take the whole thing very seriously. Taking it on the whole, the proceedings were characterised by a certain naive schoolboy atmosphere of jollity which is typically American. Furthermore, it was good publicity for the Exhibition. The Indians were an important item in the programme of attractions offered to visitors.

In the evening a monster banquet is given at the Congress Hotel by Commissioner New, which is held by the local lodges of the Order of the Sons of Italy, when I am presented with an artistically illuminated address. And the inevitable dance follows the banquet.

This time I do not wait for the end of the festivities, but slip away quietly with Ambassador Rosso, while my comrades and their partners are absorbed in the strains of a voluptuous tango. Two pretty American girls and a youth who is with them strategically cover our flight, and accompany us to the hotel. I quickly change into civilian garb and in the fond delusion that I won't be recognised, set off with the ambassador and our three young friends to the Exhibition. And now, free from all ceremonial constraint at last, we lose ourselves among the gay cosmopolitan throng in Luna Park. We are enveloped in turns in kaleidoscopic beams of blue, red, green and yellow light, as we meander with gay abandon from booth to booth. We dance, we shy coco-nuts and we patronise the shooting-gallery. My effort at maintaining my incognito, is, however, rather futile, as I discover when I find in the morning papers an account of our escapade. One sensational organ gives a very circumstantial account of the way in which I have been vamped by the famous Miss X. Needless to say, I enjoy the audacious yarn immensely myself.

When I return to the hotel after our little adventure I find a pile of telegrams waiting for me, and having answered some of them, written a few letters, and arranged numerous details pertaining to our flight to New York, I retire to bed.

During my stay on the banks of Lake Michigan I had many amusing interludes with the Chicago journalists, who, like their Montreal brothers, seem to have a flair for asking the most extraordinary questions on matters utterly irrelevant to our flight. I shall give just one typical specimen.

During the reception at the City Hall, a hawk-eyed young reporter asked me whether I thought it possible that some time in the near future the Pope would pay a visit to America. I replied that it was possible. "Would you Italians be displeased," he went on, "if the Pope decided to cross the ocean?" "Certainly not," I replied, assuming a very serious expression. "Why should we be displeased? But, I believe that, should the Holy Father decide to pay a visit to America, he

will do me the honour of flying across the Atlantic with me." The young reporter thanked me gravely and withdrew.

July 18th. I awake from a dream that I am flying across the ocean with the Pope. The programme for to-day, our last day in Chicago, includes a reception and a luncheon given to our squadron by the American Navy in an hotel in the city. American Air Force officers are also present. Before we part, Admiral Cluverius, our host, pays us a tribute, calling us "pioneers of civilisation and progress." In my reply, I express a hope that I shall soon see an American air armada in Europe.

In the afternoon we drive to Fort Sheridan on the invitation of General Parker, who is in command of the Northern American Army, and who, it will be remembered, had already met our squadron near Port Huron, when we had crossed the zone of the great Canadian lakes and were entering American territory.

To get to Fort Sheridan it has been arranged that the Italian airmen should drive in open motor-cars through the city, along Michigan Avenue, headed by troops of cavalry and squads of troops of motor-cyclists. In the rear are our fifty cars making very slow progress through the densely packed streets. Hundreds of motor-cars follow in our wake, while from every window floats a tricolour flag side by side with the stars and stripes. On Michigan Bridge we pass between two companies of soldiers who present arms. At Fort Sheridan the whole Chicago garrison parades in our honour. When I have reviewed them they carry out a series of evolutions, after which thirty-six planes of the American Air Force make a magnificent display. The military ceremonial is followed by a polo match in which General Parker himself takes part.

On the way back I call at Columbus hospital which is managed by the sisters of the Order of Blessed Cabrini, a heroic and charitable congregation of nuns, mainly of Italian birth. They welcome us with the naive delight of children and show us over the hospital. Before we part they give me a bunch of roses, and all the sisters join in singing "Giovinezza." Every member of the

squadron is presented with a little silver rose, and the Reverend Mother hands me three of these charming mementoes for my children.

When I return to the city, I ask the Italian Consul-General to call on Mayor Kelly and to present him with the gold medal of the Italian flight. Signor Castruccio will also inform the mayor that the Duce intends to present Chicago with a grand Roman column to be set up facing the anchorage on which the Italian squadron alighted. I feel quite sure that the people of Chicago will appreciate the gift. Our capital contains many noble pillars among its relics of the grandeur of ancient Rome. And now the Americans who have a profound veneration for the monuments of classical culture will adorn their great industrial capital with a trophy which is full of historic and artistic symbolism, and which is a fitting memorial to the great event which has forged anew the links which unite the old and the new world. Eternal Rome whose majestic ruins appeal so eloquently to all the nations of the earth, will receive in the shadow of the sky-scrapers the homage of the builders of the new civilisation for this column which symbolises her constructive power.

CHAPTER XVII

IN NEW YORK

IT is impossible even to guess how many people forfeited their sleep on the night of July 18th in order to be able to secure a favourable position along the banks of Lake Michigan for the purpose of witnessing our departure in the morning. Decidedly Chicago has given us a tremendous send-off—a spiritual adieu wafted to us by its multitudes, a good sprinkling of Italians among them to be sure.

July 19th. At 11.30 a.m. by Greenwich time (i.e. 6 a.m. local time) we are at Hunter Harbour, from which we shall start our flight towards New York. It is rather a long run—947 miles—in other words, one-third of the entire mileage of our homeward trip. It will not be an easy matter to take off as we are carrying a fairly heavy weight—about three tons and three hundredweight. Furthermore, our space for manœuvring is somewhat constricted. It will be rather a difficult job getting through the circumscribed stretch of lake. We shall have to take off, platoon by platoon. Furthermore, our machines must make for the open lake in order to take advantage of the wind, which means that we shall have to take off with our prows facing the city.

I say farewell to the representatives of the city corporation and of the State as well as to many other friends who have come down to the landing-stage. At 9.30 I step aboard the motor-launch. Salvos are fired from the American warship. The cheers from the crowds along the bank reach our ears in mighty waves—mighty waves which express the emotion of thousands and thousands of Americans. Now we are alongside my machine, but before stepping aboard I turn round once more towards

the crowd and wave farewell. Then I take my post—the engines are started, and we skim for half a mile over the lake. I enter into a low fog which reduces visibility to nil. Presently my machine takes off. It is just 12.43 p.m. While the other platoons pattern their movements exactly on mine, I wheel round in a wide circle over the waters of the lake, and fly over the metropolis.

We take the same route by which we arrived at Chicago, but in the opposite direction. At 12.10 p.m. we are at Angola, and at 2.45 p.m. we are right over Toledo. Hampered by the dense fog, we seek for clearer layers of atmosphere by climbing to steadily increasing altitudes. From 3,000 feet we go to 4,500 feet, and later on to 5,000 feet. The engines record 1,550 revolutions. Visibility now is excellent.

As far as Toledo we have been escorted by thirty-six American hunter planes, which fly with remarkable grace at a height just slightly greater than ours. At Toledo they say good-bye to us, and soon disappear on the western sky.

Here I wish to say just one word in praise of those splendid fellows, the American airmen, who all along displayed such anxiety to help us and show their regard for us. I recollect that on our arrival in American territory a machine which was to meet us with forty-three others as an escort of honour, met with a dangerous accident—a sideslip which very nearly proved fatal. The pilot of the plane, although suffering from shock and injuries, refused to fall out. He asked for another machine and took part in the magnificent evolutions which we admired so much.

At 3.25 p.m. we are over Cleveland, whose stately contours are set in the midst of magnificent stretches of cultivated land. At 4.0 p.m. we are over Connecticut. An hour later we are approaching the Niagara Falls at a height of 4,500 feet. Although our great altitudes makes the landscape beneath us look rather flattish, and causes everything to appear on a reduced scale, the sight of this mighty mass of water boiling in its leap of 150 feet, and exuding clouds of white smoke which soar skywards, is very impressive. This huge cascade is the overspilling of

one huge lake into another—a colossal natural phenomenon which makes the mind hark back to prehistoric times, when nature, left to exploit her own untrammelled powers, and as yet uncontrolled by science, seemed to primitive man a cruel and monstrous force.

Passing the Niagara Falls we climb still higher. At Owego we reach 6,600 feet. At 5.50 p.m. we are flying over Syracuse; at 6.7 p.m. we are over Oneida at a height of 7,800 feet. At 6.34 p.m. we are over Grand Gorge at an altitude of 10,500 feet with our engines going splendidly. The temperature, however, is very low. Our teeth are chattering with cold. The thermometer is at zero. I would like to lessen our altitude, but the clouds are too dense. It is wiser to climb even higher still, so we go up to 12,000 feet.

At this altitude we fly over cities and stretches of country. At 6.47 p.m. we emerge from the clouds and see the Hudson, the mighty river that will be our guide to New York. From Malden, after leaving Albany on our left, our course runs definitely southward. At 7.20 p.m. the immense delta of the Hudson is outlined against the skyline, with the East river on its left, and in its midst the long peninsula of Manhattan, Long Island and the archipelago which acts as a breakwater against the ocean. A whitish pall hides the vast area covered by the metropolis.

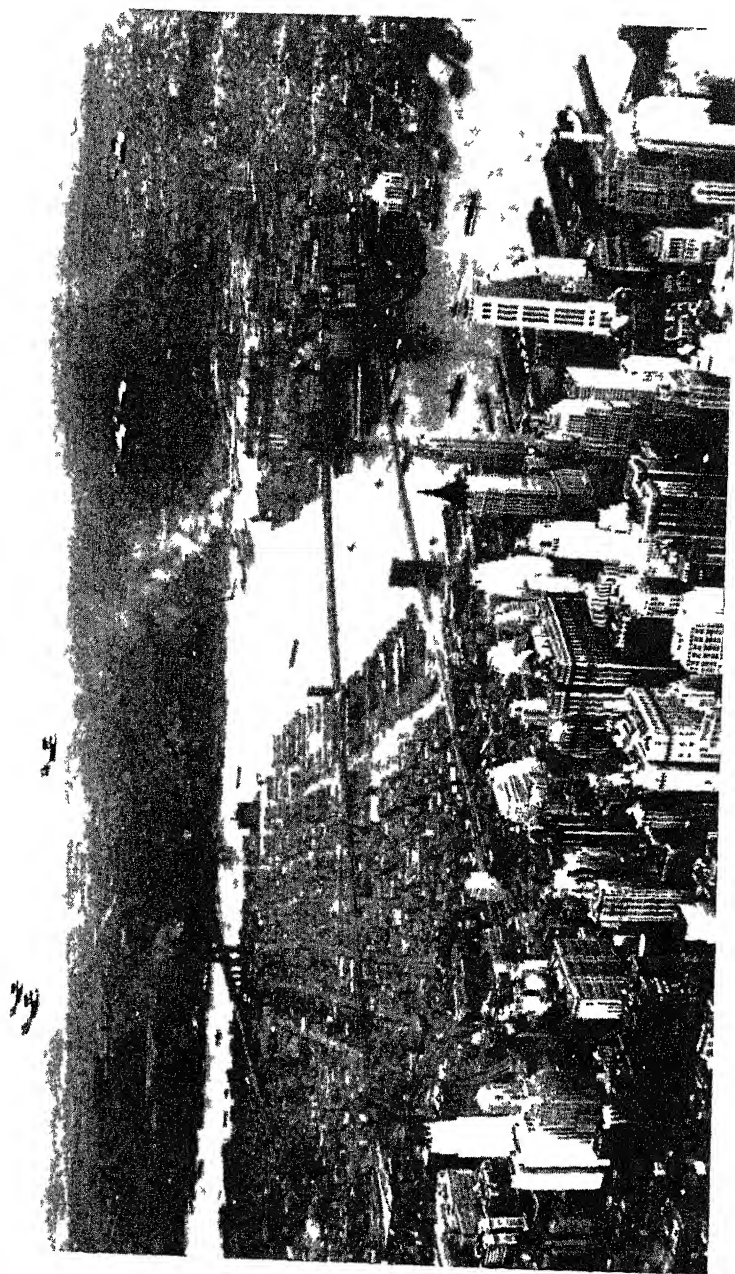
Already a number of aeroplanes owned by big American film companies are flying around us. We have to keep a sharp look-out for them all the time. I send out instructions to the platoons to get into close formation. Gradually we drop to lower altitudes, while the air gets warmer and warmer. Beneath us now are the first houses of the Bronx region, the tentacles of the city which are annually making deeper and deeper incursions into the virgin tracts of country.

In close formation we pass over Washington Bridge, which links up New York with New Jersey. The aerial flotillas mobilised by the film houses become more and more menacing. And they seem to be focusing their cameras specially on my machine.

Now we are steering for the very heart of the city. We are skirting the left bank of the Hudson. The gigantic



ITALIAN AND AMERICAN GIRLS GIVE FLOWERS TO THE PILOTS OF THE ATLANTIC FLIGHT
 AIR MARSHAL BALBO IS PROCLAIMED A CHIEF OF THE SIOUX INDIANS ON JULY 17TH



THE ARMADA IT ITS OVER NEW YORK

sky-scrapers are towering up towards us with all their bulky impressiveness. Yonder is a group of them along the bank of the river ; another group stands outlined in fearful zig-zag contours against the skyline in the very centre of the city ; a third group looms out on the apex of Manhattan with its topmost storeys merging into a sky illuminated by the rays of a pallid sun. And now we wend our way between two groups of these monsters of steel and cement, some of which seem to be straining towards us and thrusting their needle-like apices into the clouds to pierce our hulls, while others seem to be inviting us to alight on the white platforms of their flat roofs. Each sky-scraper seems to follow a freakish style of architecture all its own. The Empire State Building, the highest of them all, is a huge quadrangular tower, culminating in an elongated obelisk topped by a metallic cone about 1,200 feet high. The Rockefeller Building is a tall, narrow, rectangular block. From the roof of this giant sky-scraper a smaller and narrower sky-scraper springs further skywards.

The Chrysler Building is constructed on the lines of an early Gothic steeple, while the Mackay Building, with its pale rose tints, looks like a slender, elongated Egyptian pyramid. At one time the outlines of some of those mammoth structures conjure up pictures of the ancient cities of Babylon—at another the turreted structures of the Middle Ages. But there is a symbolism about New York's seemingly crazy patchwork architectural scheme. It is the expression in steel and cement and stone of a civilisation which has touched the zenith of its pride and glory. It is the symbolical expression of a city of victory, a token of conquest.

We cut athwart the first forest of houses, and fly over the long green park in the very heart of the city. And now beneath us, like a long deep gash running through the city from north to south, is the great artery whose name is familiar all over the world—Broadway—a street twenty-five miles long. We fly along above it from one end to the other, right to the narrowest apex of Manhattan, where other mammoth sky-scrapers leap towards us as if to trap us, and where the waters of the two rivers

meet. Beneath us are the countless piers of New York Harbour, looking like giant teeth which Manhattan projects into the Hudson and East Rivers.

The vessels that are berthed are decorated with flags and bunting, while we can see the sailors on the decks, tiny black compact masses. Yonder big vessel, white as far as the Plimsoll line and black below it, is the *Rex*. We recognise her by the stately bulk and elegant contours. The tricolour flying from our machines as we drop to a lower altitude, seems to exchange greetings with the immense tricolour floating from the stern of the *Rex*. Men are swarming up the masts of the vessel and her siren is shooting skywards, a long streamer of steam—a strident welcome which we cannot hear, as all the ships in New York Harbour are giving us a similar boisterous greeting, while factory whistles join in the unearthly din.

Hands are waving from every window. The people have ventured out on the topmost ledges of the skyscrapers. Huge flags are floating from the tops of all the buildings. In the squares and along the streets beneath us the densely-packed throngs are standing motionless, and gazing up at the sky which re-echoes the roar of triumph of our engines.

My eye now rests on the gigantic Statue of Liberty brandishing its bronze torch towards the Atlantic. It stands boldly outlined in the huge expanse of green sea bounded by Manhattan, New Jersey and Brooklyn. And away in the bay I see Governor Island, which was used for so long as a place of quarantine for our emigrants, and Ellis Island, and further on that larger island towards which the squat tugboats are hurrying.

Now we make towards Brooklyn after passing over its famous bridge which has been the theme of so many stories, and we fly over endless blocks of houses which look from our altitude like squares on a chess-board. The anchorage at Floyd Bennet is at the extreme verge of Coney Island which appears like a mushroom excrescence on Long Island.

A very long street bisects the town of Flatbush where thousands of motor cars are parked in serried formation, filling up all the open spaces, having fetched from all

parts of the metropolis the multitudes who are awaiting our arrival.

The twenty-four silver hawks, as the New Yorkers call our machines, cast fleeting shadows over the crowd surrounding the anchorage and spreading into the open fields as yet free from the invasion of the jerry-builder.

There, right ahead of us, silhouetted against the sky, is the silvery fish-shaped bulk of the huge dirigible *Akron*, the world's biggest airship. Hovering around us are 100 American aeroplanes, ranging from small towing crafts to huge machines. There is even an autogiro among them, whirling its blades, while from its stern it tows a long streamer bearing words of greeting to us. And yonder, from the opposite side of the horizon, two other dirigibles are emerging, and are approaching the mammoth *Akron*, looking like baby whales in quest of their mother.

We have completed a series of wide circular evolutions above this great rally of men and machines, and are now gliding at a low altitude over the water. Then we turn and fly once more right over the watching millions, after which, leaving the other platoons to continue their leisurely cruise while waiting their turn to alight, my platoon descends towards the water, floats gracefully along its surface, and settles gently at its mooring. It is 8 p.m. by Greenwich time.

And now, with our stepping on the wharf of the anchorage, begin the memorable days we spent at New York.

You can find no city in Italy, nor for the matter of that, in all Europe which can be compared with New York for the excellence and variety of its means of communication. Although it contains 7,000,000 inhabitants, its facilities for transferring a large percentage of this vast population from one end of the city to the other, or from the city to the outlying cities in the shortest possible time, are magnificent. Nor can you find another town with streets 300 feet wide and 25 miles long. Nor can you find another metropolis anywhere with such a pronounced taste, nay with such a positive passion for monster meetings.

America has the reputation of being a country where

the most intense individualism prevails. What a misconception! The individual in a city like New York is utterly submerged by the mass-mind. The individual in that capital toils, suffers and enjoys himself collectively. An eternal, irresistible, inescapable force compels him to fall into line with his fellow-citizens in his thoughts, in his emotions and in his desires. The result is a system of collective imitativeness. But what concentrated energy there is in this solidarity of multiple forces, all tending towards the same goal! In a little over fifty years this nation of eternal youth has created an empire. Of course, it is inevitably a mechanised civilisation. It is mainly automatic in its manifestations, and it cannot suppress a tendency towards a certain primitive brutality in its expression which is characteristic of all social organisations that have not evolved as the joint product of the forces of race-consciousness and of the slow process of time. Still, this mechanised civilisation has not only impressed itself for good on America, but it has left its impress on other continents.

There is no doubt that this extraordinary phenomenon is the outcome of the psychological solidarity of the American people. The American masses, just because they are really elemental and primitive, have a freshness, a vehemence, and a faith that the insidious effects of scepticism can never tarnish. To the American masses faith in some great national objective is a necessity. They must have a mass ideal—some source of mutual inspiration and enthusiasm. There is a saying that an American who is forced to do something that his fellow-man does not do, is like a child of five who has lost his mother in a crowd. And yet the general trend of modern civilisation not only in America, but everywhere, verges more and more towards collectivity and uniformity.

I am introduced by Signor Grossardi, the Italian Consul-General, and by Lieutenant-Colonel Infante, the commandant of the base, to the members of New York Corporation, to the chief military, naval and air force officers, and to the leaders of the Italian colony. I also meet Mr. Stone, the vice-president of the "Mackay Radio," who places at my disposal his colossal telegraphic

and telephonic system, which gives employment to 190,000 people. And, to my great delight, I am introduced to Carnera.

An address of welcome is delivered by Mr. Pope on behalf of the mayor of New York, in reply to which I express my great gratification that the American metropolis has fully appreciated the fact that our expedition was undertaken in the cause of progress and as a demonstration of the esteem in which Italy held America.

The crews, having moored their machines, are now assembled on the wharf. Accompanied by Mr. Pope, I step into a motor-car and the rest of my boys are distributed among fifty other cars alongside. Policemen on motor-cycles go ahead of us, making an infernal din with their klaxons, and clear a path for us on the long straight highway leading from Jamaica Bay right to the heart of Brooklyn and across its magnificent bridge over the East River to Manhattan. On both sides of this route, some twelve miles long, unbroken lines of cheering people are assembled. But the ovation given to us reaches its zenith as we cross the Italian quarter of Brooklyn, and pass along Canal Street, Marlborough Street, La Fayette Street and Fourth Avenue in the lower part of Manhattan, where the Italian population runs into hundreds of thousands. Here every house is gaily adorned with tricolour flags and bunting. Women, old men, youths, girls and babies cheer in unison. The name of Italy is on everybody's lips.

At length we reach Park Avenue, an elegant thoroughfare adorned with trees and flower-beds, and halt at the Ambassador Hotel, where we are to stay. But the crowd has got ahead of us, and the foyers, the lifts and the corridors are congested. At first it looks as if I won't be able to get to my suite. However, after a considerable expenditure of small talk, tact and nervous energy, I manage to wedge my way into my bedroom.

I cannot get into telephonic communication with the Duce because it is 8 p.m. by local time, which means that it is after midnight in Italy. Consequently I shall send him a long telegraphic report.

At 9 p.m. we are guests at a dinner given at the Columbia Yacht Club by the military and naval officers who are resident in New York. There are about fifty Americans present who have devoted a considerable amount of time and energy towards organising a welcome for the squadron. American soldiers are very genial and sociable fellows, and I still have very pleasant memories of our conversation during that dinner—a dinner singularly free from the usual stiffness and restraint of official gatherings.

Mayor O'Brien, of New York, a ruddy-faced genial fellow of Irish extraction, with a white moustache, says, in the course of a brief address, that it takes men of strong nerve and magnificent health to face a flight across the Atlantic. He also comments on the youthfulness of my crews.

General Nolan, who is in command of the military forces in New York, and is a well-known wag, twits the mayor about the possibility of his being ousted at the imminent election. "If the opposition can induce General Balbo to stand as Republican candidate, Mayor O'Brien, the Democratic candidate, will be left in the cart," he says. But the quick-witted Irishman very soon after manages to score heavily at the expense of his military friend.

The people in the United States are especially interested in the North Atlantic route, along which they contemplate running their civilian air service to Europe. Colonel Lindbergh himself is busily intent at the moment on the realisation of this great dream.

This very evening I receive the following telegram from Cartwright, signed by Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh:

"Please accept our warm congratulations on your splendid flight. You have given an example of excellent organisation put into effect with marvellous precision. We regret exceedingly that we were unable to meet you at Cartwright, but we are very glad to have met your fellow officers of the *Alice*.

CHARLES A. LINDBERGH, ANNE M. LINDBERGH."

I send the following reply immediately :

“ The greetings which they have just received from America’s most brilliant hero, whose flight across the ocean will be recorded in history, flatter and honour the officers and crew of the Italian Atlantic squadron, who thank Colonel Lindbergh most warmly and wish him and his undaunted comrade many further aerial triumphs.”

It is now very late as we are returning to our hotel, but there are still enormous crowds outside the door. We are leaving in the morning, for Washington, at the invitation of President Roosevelt.

Friday, July 21st, will be devoted by the people of New York to special entertainments for the Italian squadron. We shall perform even a greater miracle on that day than we did in Chicago, as we shall condense the programme of a week into twenty-four hours. I always aim at carrying out scrupulously the Duce’s order : “ The maximum of discipline in the air with a minimum of waste of energy on land.”

All the officers are not coming with me to Washington. Some of them have to look after the machines which are being carefully overhauled in preparation for our imminent return to Italy. Work is being started on them this very morning. I shall introduce twenty of my comrades to President Roosevelt.

It is amusing to travel across New York at a quick pace, preceded by the police on motor-cycles. Motor-cars and pedestrians immediately get out of the way when they hear those appalling klaxons. Thanks to them, an hour’s run is cut down to ten minutes.

An amphibian plane belonging to the United States Navy, a new type which I find very interesting, is waiting for me at the aerodrome. It is the plane which President Roosevelt uses. My officers, accompanied by pilots of the American Air Force, are distributed among a little fleet of other aeroplanes. We have excellent weather for our flight, which is over New Jersey and Maryland. We fly over Philadelphia and Baltimore on our way. During most of the flight I am in a deep sleep. At Bollingfield,

the aerodrome attached to the capital, which we reach at 10.30 a.m., we are met by military officials and a huge crowd, who escort us to our hotel.

At 1 p.m. I set out for the White House, accompanied by the Ambassador, the Air Attaché and my officers. A band greets us with the strains of the Royal March and "Giovinezza." Along the avenues of the garden of the magnificent residence of the President of the United States an enormous crowd gives us a most enthusiastic ovation.

The President receives us in the State Reception Hall. He grips my hand warmly, and says that he is delighted to have as his guests the valiant aviators who have flown the Atlantic. Then he shakes hands with each of my officers, whom I introduce individually to him. We next enter the dining-room. Among the guests at the President's hospitable table are Mr. Phillips, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, General Foulouis, the chief of Marine Aviation, Admiral King, and the President's two aides-de-camp, Colonel Watson and Captain Vernon.

The other guests are Lieutenant-Colonel Sbernadori, the Air Attaché, and the following officers of the squadron: Pellegrini, Longo, Nannini, Recagno, Giordano, Biani, Questa, Biseo, Borghetti and Miglia.

Like all Americans, the President is a man of extraordinary courtesy and genial and easy demeanour. He is a very charming conversationalist. Throughout the meal he talks about Italy. He has a great admiration for the Duce, whose tremendous performance during a space of ten years for the regeneration of Italy at home and the restoration of her prestige abroad he very warmly appreciates. I intend to incorporate in my telegraphic report to Mussolini the President's tribute to him, and his warm approval of his views about relieving congestion of the cities. The President speaks very enthusiastically to me of his own scheme for putting the surplus populations of the cities on the land. I cannot say whether he is veering towards Fascism or not. Decidedly he, too, is a dictator. Not for one moment during luncheon does the President fail to rivet my earnest attention and that of his guests with his animated conversational power. I feel all the

time that I am in the presence of a statesman of tremendous breadth of vision and of tireless energy.

Towards the end of the meal the President delivers an address in the course of which he says that the splendid manner in which our flight has been carried out as the result of a most detailed preparation and a meticulously perfect system of organisation, has made a profound impression on the American people. It is the first time, he says, in the history of aviation that an enterprise of such magnitude has been planned and carried out in a systematic manner. He would like the Italian squadron to make a longer stay in order to give an opportunity to the extraordinary number of mayors of cities and individuals who had expressed to him their desire to be able to show their esteem for the Atlantic flyers. He adds that for a long time there has been a wonderful sympathy of sentiment between America and Italy, a sympathy which the Atlantic flight has considerably consolidated. In conclusion he says that this very evening he will send a telegram to the King of Italy to express his personal gratification and that of the United States for the visit of the Italian air squadron.

In reply to the President's generous tribute I thank him for his enthusiastic appreciation of the flight of the Italian squadron, and I assure him that the memory of the greeting accorded to us by the great people of the United States will never fade from our memory, and that the traditional friendship between the two peoples has been consolidated by our flight. In conclusion I request the President to accept the gold medal of our expedition as a memento.

We say good-bye to the President after the meal and call upon the Secretary of War, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Commerce. We subsequently meet the other officers of the squadron who have been guests at a luncheon given in their honour at the Carlton Hotel by the Overseas Writers' Club. We all go to the green hill overlooking the city, where the heroes of the Great War sleep, and place a wreath of laurel on the monument to the Unknown American Soldier.

Later on Signor Rosso gives a reception in our honour in the Italian Embassy, at which the leading citizens and diplomatic representatives of the United States and the British, Japanese and Argentine Ambassadors are present.

In the evening 480 guests are seated at a dinner given in our honour at the Country Club by the Senator Swanson, the Secretary of the Navy. After dinner there is dancing on the terrace. At midnight a special train takes us to New York.

CHAPTER XVIII

NEW YORK'S TRIBUTE TO AIR-MARSHAL BALBO

JULY 21st. This is the day which New York is dedicating to the honour of the Atlantic fliers. It is an old-time custom of the metropolis to give a special ovation to those who have fulfilled a great undertaking. The most modern of cities is equally ready to give a Roman triumph to Americans and to foreigners. The victorious culmination of the enterprise occurred in New York. And in staging this ovation, which is at once both a religious ritual and a celebration, in which thousands and thousands of citizens take part with their typical enthusiasm, New York seems to be reverting to the traditions of that other great city which in wealth, prestige and power was its prototype in the days of antiquity—mother Rome.

But very seldom in bygone years has New York accorded such a triumph of such splendour and magnitude to any cause or to any individual as she has given the Italian air squadron. All the newspapers unanimously assert that the only ovation that can stand comparison with it was that which greeted the American troops on their return from the war in 1919. As for ourselves we have been somewhat overwhelmed and dazed by the reception that Broadway gave us. I don't think that ever in my life have I witnessed such a wonderful display of popular enthusiasm.

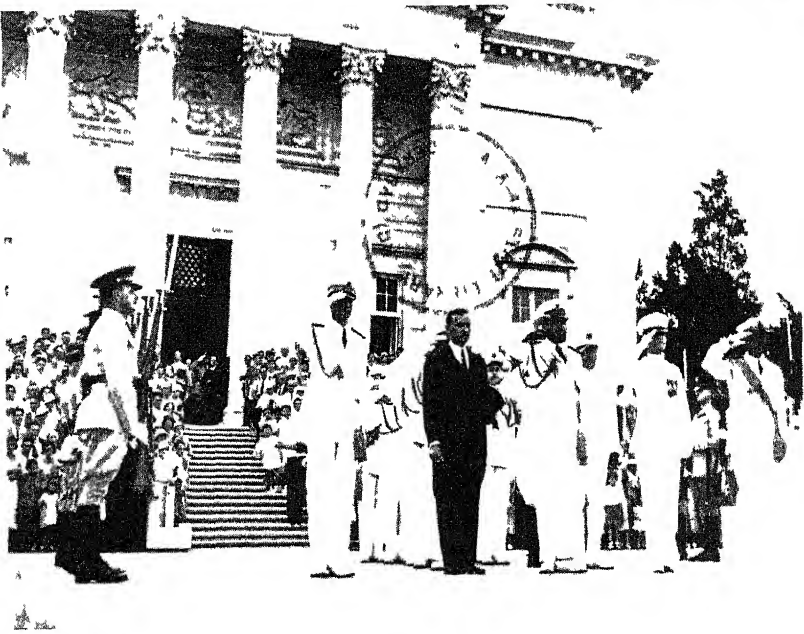
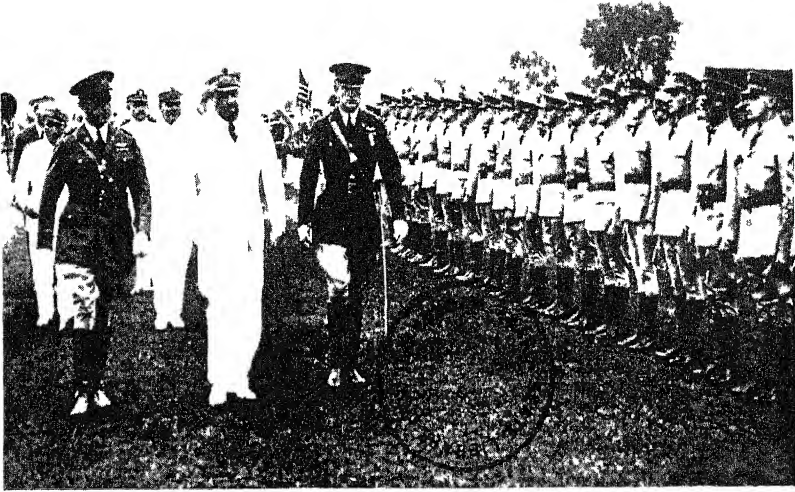
A long line of motor-cars has pulled up in front of our hotel in Park Avenue. It is 11.30 a.m. They number 100 in all. I enter the first in the queue with the Italian ambassador, Augusto Rosso, Mr. Generoso Pope and Captain Calo carrying the colours of the squadron. Then the 100 cars dash at the tremendous speed of from forty to

forty-five miles an hour across Forty-seventh Street, Fifth Avenue and Sixth Avenue, and then in the shadow of the monster buildings that stretch along the harbour on the Hudson towards the wharves where we see silhouetted the massive bulk of our *Rex* at her moorings, while flags are floating gaily and sirens are making an infernal din all along the waterfront. Skirting the harbour all the time, we reach the green open space of the Battery. This famous salient which Manhattan has driven towards the ocean is the starting-point of the procession that is to escort us through Broadway to the City Hall.

Battery Square has a somewhat old-world atmosphere about it which harks back to the early centuries of the Dutch settlers when New York was known as New Amsterdam. Surrounded by small houses which the skyscrapers that bulk up behind them dwarf into insignificance, it looks seaward towards the Statue of Liberty where the green salty waters of the ocean meet the yellow currents of the Hudson. On the verge of the sea there still stand the venerable ruins of the ancient fortress with the Dutch artillery of the sixteenth century. Perhaps these rather blighted-looking flower-beds and these mouldering trees date back also to that remote period.

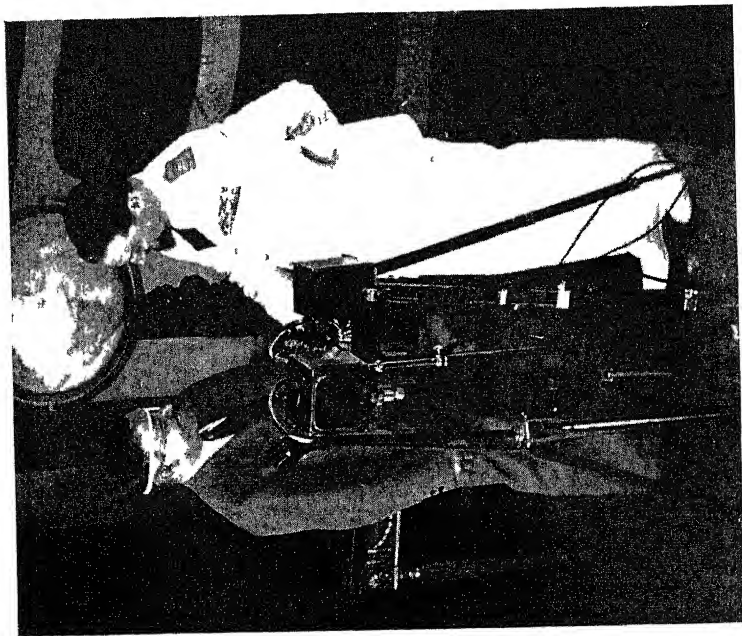
The citizens of New York like to start from the Battery for the great demonstrations which make the vast artery of traffic their objective, as though to present a panorama of the progress of their triumphant civilisation throughout the centuries from their remote and humble beginnings. For us Italians this old-world green patch has a peculiar sentimental appeal. According to tradition, it was at the Battery, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, that Giovanni Verazzono, the great Florentine pioneer, got his first footing in America. He was the first European to touch the island of Manhattan and to sail up the Hudson.

Broadway debouches from the Battery—Broadway, the very name of which symbolises all over the world the dazzling brilliance, the wealth and the hectic life of New York—Broadway, the dream of all those who leave their humble cabins in quest of a chimerical wealth—Broad-

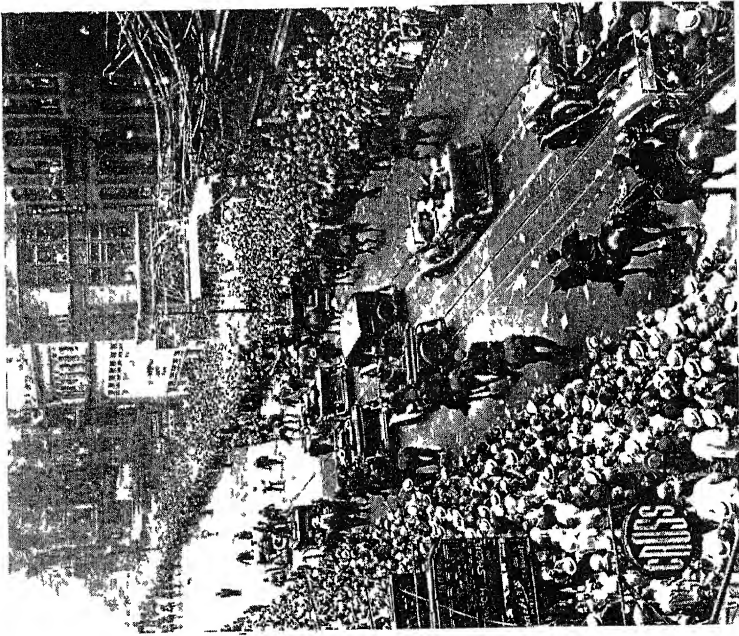


BAIBO KIVIEWS THE AMERICAN GUARD OF HONOUR AT WASHINGTON CAMP

THE ATLANTIC FILMS AT THE MONUMENT TO THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER AT WASHINGTON



BALBO AND WILEY POST AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE
JATTER AT NEW YORK FOLLOWING HIS WORLD FLIGHT



THE GREAT POPULAR OVATION ON BROADWAY

way, which conjures up visions of gold, glory and gaiety—Broadway, a synonymous term for prosperity.

The procession of cars is on the move. In the one behind mine is General Pellegrini with the Italian-American judge, Mr. Freschi, General Nolan and Admiral Stirling; in the third are Lieutenant-Colonel Longo and Lieutenant-Colonel Cagna with the Air Attaché. And in every car that follows is one member from the crews of the squadron. Ahead of us is the band of the 70th Regiment, a composite company of sailors and harbour officials and a troop of mounted police. The procession of motor-cars is flanked on either side by another troop of police.

The elevated railway is literally swarming with people. Heads emerge from every window along our route. The sidewalks are congested with a tide of humanity as we move along at a walking pace. We are now out of the Battery area, and are entering the region of the lofty skyscrapers, which seem to stab the clouds. Every window on every floor of these mammoth structures is packed with spectators. A bright sun gleaming in a cloudless sky lights up the festive scene. And a never-ending blend of the raucous sounds of sirens, klaxons and steam whistles vies with the cheering of millions in voicing America's welcome to us. Tricolour flags are waving from every window and from the roofs of the skyscrapers, and multicoloured bunting floats everywhere in festoons in the faint July breeze. And the air is dark with never-ending showers of confetti and shredded paper—a veritable blizzard of multicoloured snow which completely covers the pavement, and lies an inch deep on the roofs and bonnets of the motor-cars.

Now we are passing through Wall Street, the world's most important business centre—Wall Street, into whose cellars has converged all the gold of Europe. It is a narrow dark street on which the sun never shines. Yonder is the famous exchange, which has seen gigantic fortunes amassed and dissipated—meteors that flash in the sky, and vanish without leaving a trace. At its windows are standing, bare-headed, and wildly cheering and waving flags, long-faced and hawk-eyed Americans, men

to whom time is money, and money the most important thing on earth. Even they have abandoned to-day their gloomy offices, their typewriters and their telephones, and are joining their countrymen in extending a welcome to us.

In the Italian quarter through which the procession next winds slowly, the people greet us in the language of our native land. Every grade of Italian society and every part of the kingdom of Italy from the Alps to Sicily, are represented in the crowd along the sidewalks, at every window and on the roofs of the houses. We are now among our own people, who let themselves go in a more ebullient fashion than the Americans. There is more volubility and more frenzied gesticulation than we encountered hitherto. And many eyes are moist, and many voices tremble with emotion. We are among the poor people of Little Italy who have impressed on a large area of New York the colourfulness, the garb and the atmosphere of their native summer clime—a poor people whom the craving for sunshine, open air and human society induces to swarm on the pavements in front of their homes. Beloved, kindly and picturesque folk of my native land, too often the butt of thoughtless tourists who find a theme for their jejune jokes in the mannerisms, the habits and the outlook of Little Italy!

Groups of workmen whose backs are bent with toil, tired-looking mothers, girls dressed in gaily-coloured cotton frocks, and babies with bright brown eyes. The squadron's flag waves before their eyes as we pass along, a flag that is a token of victory, a symbol of revival. All eyes are focused on this little flag on which the sunlight flashes as it floats in the breeze. Then hands are raised in greeting, the hard hands of workmen who have toiled for decades in a foreign land. Women and children join in the tumultuous welcome. A workman surrounded by a bevy of children and carrying one on his left arm, points to the little ones with his free arm, and shouts aloud to me: "These are Mussolini's children." I give him a smiling nod which tells him that my heart re-echoes his sentiment. Our procession continues to advance between two lines of people where the same scenes of enthusiastic

welcome are repeated again and again. I feel that in the hands that are raised there is the symbolism of a sacred rite. It is not me they are saluting—it is our country, whose unworthy representative I am. These Italians know that we have faced the dark ocean, traversed the skies of two continents and run the constant risk of death in order to meet them and to consolidate and make a greater and more glorious nation of ocean-divided Italy. They know that we are the winged messengers of the great chief who has relieved their lot and enhanced their prestige in America, who has given them a new dignity and a new sense of their own worth, and made the whole world respect them. They are thinking of the future—of the days when their children will face the battle of life, and will not be regarded as mere beasts of burden by the powerful and the wealthy. They see their children's children holding posts of honour in the great metropolis which, until very recently, placed them on a level with the Chinese and the negroes. Farewell, little Italy! May this day that we dedicate to you be the beginning of even more happy days!

We have halted before the City Hall, on the tree-shaded square along the four sides of which the troops who have escorted us are drawn up. The City Hall is a building which dates back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, and its elegant contours are in strange contrast with the lofty severe silhouettes of the skyscrapers around it. It was here that George Washington wrote his first message to the American Congress, it was here that he guided the first tottering footsteps of the infant republic, it was here that he drew up the famous treaties which guaranteed its integrity and independence. Its bourgeois-gentlemanly, statesman-soldierly atmosphere still clings around it. There is something majestic about the little room whose modest furniture comprises among other things Washington's writing-desk, and whose walls are adorned with the portraits of the statesmen who along with him and in subsequent years founded and consolidated the United States of America—portraits of austere, grim-looking, puritanical pioneers. In the Aldermen's Hall is assembled the City Council, presided over

by Mayor O'Brien. In the centre are assembled the hundred ocean fliers.

There is a tremulous note of emotion in O'Brien's voice as he welcomes us on behalf of the 7,000,000 inhabitants of the metropolis, of whom over 1,000,000 are Italians. He says that from this point of view New York can consider itself as the biggest Italian city in the world. "You gave us a unique and extraordinary display," he adds, "when your squadron flew along the Hudson, over Manhattan and Brooklyn and anchored in Jamaica Bay. We offered up thanks to God then that your twenty-four flying-boats arrived without accident and gave such extraordinary proof of consolidated effort, organisation and skill. And in extending to you a welcome on behalf of the people of New York, we have in our minds the two other great Italians, Marconi and Columbus. Columbus discovered America, but you have found a new way of linking America and Italy, and you have discovered it by carrying out the greatest aerial enterprise that the world has ever seen. You have stated that you had just been fulfilling the instructions of your leader, Mussolini. We are exceedingly grateful to him for this great proof of his friendship, and we request that you will convey to him our cordial greetings and our gratitude."

At the end of his speech he pins on my tunic the gold medal which the city of New York awards to deeds of valour.

I thank the mayor and through him the city which has given us such a hospitable reception. I assure him, however, that the success of the ocean flight has not been due to us, but to the New Italy of Mussolini, and to the humble mechanics who have made our flying-boats, lowly men belonging to that very stock which the mayor praised in his speech—a stock to which all of us present felt honoured in belonging. I emphasise the Duce's injunction that we should convey to America a message of esteem from the New Italy, and add that we have another task to fulfil—the task of conveying to him the news of the great regard which the American people have for him. We shall tell him that in America we felt as much at home as if we were on our own native soil. I

make a brief survey of the feats of those pioneers of aviation who thirty years ago undertook the first experiments in aviation in America. I speak of Wiley Post, who at the moment is carrying out alone a flight round the world. In conclusion I express the view that the spiritual brotherhood engendered by linking up the ends of the earth is the only way of restoring peace on a permanent basis.

Officially, the ovation is now over. But another great demonstration awaits the members of the squadron as they appear on the large staircase which leads to the square. As we drive away quickly, the air is still vibrating with the echoes of the plaudits of the enthusiastic crowd.

In the afternoon we have to face another demonstration. The Italian Consulate has taken steps to carry my request that all the receptions which the different sections of my hospitable countrymen had organised for us should be amalgamated. The original programme included dinners, receptions and visits organised by the leading patriotic and charitable institutions of New York. If we had acceded to the wishes of the millions of Italians in the metropolis, fifteen days would not have been enough for us. And so there will be only one great gathering at Madison Square Bowl on July 18th and one dinner on July 21st.

There are, according to a rough computation, 200,000 people assembled for the reception to be held in the biggest hall in the United States. Big as it is, it is inadequate to accomodate more than half of them. The others have to content themselves with standing outside the huge amphitheatre. They see us pass in, and afterwards join in the bursts of applause.

Once more we traverse the route from the hotel and over Brooklyn Bridge to Long Island. When at the head of my boys I enter the hall, it is already crowded with people. Thousands of flags mark the rally-points in the hall for the various societies of three states—New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. This is the region over which the official jurisdiction of Signor Grossardi extends. With the aid of the vice-consul, Signor Spinelli, he has

undertaken the task of organising this mammoth reunion.

As we are entering the hall we are flanked by two lines of girls dressed in white, who scatter flowers in our path, while several bands play Italian national airs and the people cheer and wave little flags. The girls give a splash of colour amid the sombre garb of the multitude. The war veterans are wearing Alpini caps and cockades. We pass along the flower-strewn carpet amid this carnival of music and cheering. The squadron, looking very impressive in white uniforms with gold braid, is drawn up in square formation around me on a lofty balcony in the centre of the amphitheatre. Immediately we are greeted with a tremendous outburst of applause, punctuated with cheers for Italy and Mussolini. After about half an hour of this tumultuous orgy of acclamation, silence falls on the assembly, and an Italian priest, Father Arcesi, the pastor of an Italian church in Brooklyn, invokes God's blessing on Italy, on the Duce and on the young aviators who have flown the Atlantic. A blend of deep emotion and mystic enthusiasm pervades the vast audience as they listen to the priest's words, uttered in a voice trembling with emotion.

When the priest has sat down, loud-speakers announce that I am about to make a speech. Radio-telegraphic installations have been set up on the balcony in order to insure that my words will be heard all over the world. I find it almost impossible to control the wild beating of my heart and the deep emotion of my soul at this moment, as I realise that beyond the ocean there are 40,000,000 Italians who are spiritually united with the thousands here before me in paying a tribute to their eternal native land.

And now with all the fervour of my soul I proclaim my profession of faith to the vast crowd upon which a sudden hush has fallen.

"Italians of New York, our comrades, people of my race and my faith, with the help of the Almighty the Atlantic squadron has attained its great ambition. Through the pathways of the skies we are bringing to you from Rome to America the greetings of Mussolini.

Our forty-eight engines have carried us to you so that you may hear in the sky of the metropolis the heart-beat of your native land, a heart-beat of steel and fire.

"Take pride in the fact that you are Italians, my exiled fellow-countrymen, and you especially, toilers with sturdy arms and honest hearts, because it is in you above all others that the Duce centres his affection and his pride, you who possess faith, you who have the genius and the patience of those at home who have rebuilt Rome!

"Mussolini has ended the period of humiliation for you. To be an Italian now is something to be proud of. Fifty million Italians are continuing their triumphant march along the paths of the earth, the sea and the sky under the ægis of Rome and under the command of your great chief. You are no longer a mere despised mob, you are, each of you, units in Italy's army fighting in the cause of civilisation throughout the world.

"Italians, who are guests of Great America, you have been chosen to play a great role for your ancient and your new native land. Show your respect for America's laws in order to be respected. Honour alike the tricolour and the glorious Stars and Stripes. For countless years may they float side by side in the breeze, and may nothing ever sunder them in future.

"I shall soon start with my gallant ocean pilots on our flight to Rome. If with the help of God we arrive home, I shall tell the Duce that you, Italians of New York, have realised fully in America the lofty destiny which he is preparing for Italy."

The immense audience punctuates my address with passionate outbursts of applause. There is an under-current of tense emotion in the prolonged acclamation which greets my reference to the bad old days of humiliation and shame for the Italians in America—days of humiliation and shame which were ended by the triumph of Fascism. And their enthusiasm reaches its culmination when I speak of America as the second native land of Italian exiles.

There is a moment's lull as Signor Rosso, the Ambassador, rises from his seat. He reads a message which I intend to despatch to the Duce :

"The Italians of New York assembled in a mass meeting to receive the message of greeting from the Duce which the Italian squadron had brought from one continent to the other, reply that they reaffirm their determination and pride in showing eternal loyalty to the great leader who has restored power, glory and prestige to their native land."

The message, which is signed also by Signor Rosso and Signor Grossardi, is greeted by the audience with vociferous applause.

Then in conjunction with my boys I sing "Giovinezza." The mighty volume of the voices of the vast audience joins us. The strains of the song are next taken up by the thousands of Italians outside the amphitheatre, and travel on the invisible paths of the ether to the laughing shores of Italy. Next comes the American national anthem, played by Italian bands distributed in various parts of the amphitheatre.

When we leave the amphitheatre we are greeted by a final demonstration of frenzied applause which accompanies us all the way to our hotel.

A few hours later I send the following telegram to the Duce :

"I am convinced now that there is no truth in the reports about anti-Fascism in America. We have not found the faintest trace of anti-Fascism here. During the ovations which have been accorded to us by thousands of our fellow-countrymen and by immense crowds of Americans there has never been the slightest discordant note. If some negligible anti-Fascist minority still exists, it is definitely swamped by the passion for Italian nationalism and by the new sense of pride which our fellow-countrymen feel in the glory of your excellency."

At the meeting in Madison Square a distinct political atmosphere—an atmosphere of passionate Fascism—prevails. And when later at the Commodore Hotel the

crowded day ends with a banquet at which 4000 people are seated, I take the opportunity to explain more fully the Fascist objective of the Italian Air Force founded by Mussolini. I extol before this representative gathering of New York's Italian colony, the genesis, the aims and the hopes of the Revolution. And once more I feel that my audience has joined me in a spiritual fusion with Fascist Italy triumphant from the Alps to Sicily under the leadership of Mussolini. And my vast audience is in sympathy with me. It is carried along by a resistless surge of memories of hardships undergone in the past, of home-sickness and of pride of race and of unshakeable faith in Mussolini's magic feats for the regeneration of Italy.

At a rather later hour a reception—the last of the long series—is given to us by the “Italia-America Society” in the Waldorf-Astoria. Several thousands are assembled in the luxurious premises of the mammoth hotel, the world's largest structure of its kind. My boys have a very gay time, and dance with unflagging zest until well into the small hours. Not being an expert dancer I get a bit tired after a while of the fun, and quietly slip out with Signor Rosso, the ambassador, and a few friends to visit the *New York Times* offices. As I had formerly been a journalist myself I am most curious to see the wheels go round in the building which houses America's most influential daily paper—an organisation which is the most unique of its kind in the world, I am told. I am very well repaid for my visit, as I consider that the plant, the organisation of the various departments and the despatch system are really marvellous. The eighty rotary printing-presses, the three hundred linotype machines, and the amazing labyrinth of telephonic and wireless apparatuses hold me spellbound. There are a great many Italians among the army of employees of the *New York Times*. As I look at my countrymen working earnestly and efficiently in the various departments, my conviction deepens that there is not a single big American enterprise in which Italians do not play a very important role. An Italian permits me to sit at his linotype machine, and is amused at my

performance as an amateur compositor. I also go through the stereotype department with another Italian, and thence to the pits where the latest types of rotary presses are embedded—mammoth machines which do not stop for a second even when fresh drums of paper are being adjusted.

Wiley Post, the famous American aviator, who has just completed his northern trip round the world in seven days, is expected to arrive in New York during the night of July 22nd. He encountered fog, adverse winds and gales during the course of his trip, in which he flew over the desert regions of Siberia and Alaska. An accident which befell him *en route* did not depress him or make him desist from his attempt. My boys are anxious to get an opportunity of paying a tribute to him on the successful conclusion to his lightning flight.

I have made arrangements in advance to be at Floyd Bennett Airport towards midnight to meet him. Unfortunately, now that all the official receptions are over, I have dispensed with the escort of police motor-cyclists who had hitherto kept the way clear for me through the traffic. The result is that my car is hopelessly held up in the congestion on the streets of Brooklyn, entailed by the converging of the thousands of vehicles upon the airport. Consequently I decide to postpone my meeting with Wiley Post until morning.

Sunday morning, July 23rd. I meet Wiley Post at his hotel. I congratulate him on having added another record to the annals of aviation, and contend that he has reached the extreme limit of rapid flight that is humanly possible. Post looks anything but cheerful, however, and tells me that he is not absolutely satisfied with his flight. He had hoped to complete his tour in four days.

He is very enthusiastic about the Italian flight, which he asserts is a masterpiece of organisation and discipline. He visualises it as the pioneer step towards inter-continental aerial communications in the very near future. He tells me that foreign aviators consider me as their leader. Italian aviation, according to Post's estimate, leads the world. Our conversation in the magnificent foyer of the Roosevelt Hotel attracts the

attention of the film and Press photographers, who focus their cameras on us from every angle. The American Press regards my heart-to-heart conversation with Post as a proof of the sincere solidarity and camaraderie that prevail among the ocean-fliers of all nations.

This being Sunday morning, all the members of the squadron go to Mass together, as we did at Chicago and at Reykjavik. We are invited to attend a special Mass offered up for us at St. Patrick's Cathedral by Bishop Carroll, acting on behalf of the Cardinal Archbishop of New York, at the moment unavoidably absent from the city. When in foreign countries I am particularly anxious not only to show our respect for the Catholic religion, which is the ancient creed of our country, but also to emphasise the rigorous observance of its tenets by our soldiers.

I accept Bishop Carroll's invitation, and set out for the cathedral with my officers in full uniform. We find the beautiful church, whose steeples soar heavenward in the heart of Fifth Avenue, densely crowded. Father Robotti delivers a sermon in the course of which he warmly welcomes the Italian aviators to the cathedral and offers up prayers for our safe return to Rome. As we leave the church we are greeted by a tremendous extempore ovation from the vast crowd outside, which effectively blocks up all traffic for some time, along the most elegant and busiest street in New York.

The speedy overhauling of our flying-boats, which has been supervised by the mechanical experts among our crews, is now completed. All the machines have been refuelled, and if the weather permits, we shall take off to-morrow, July 24th, in the direction of Shediac and Shoal Harbour for our second flight across the ocean.

CHAPTER XIX

ANXIOUS DAYS IN NEWFOUNDLAND

JULY 24th. I am awake at dawn. We career rapidly through the streets of the city. The police on motor-cycles clear the way for us with their shrill klaxons. The news of our imminent departure was known throughout New York, and attracted enormous crowds along the route to the Floyd Bennet Airport, despite the earliness of the hour. Outside the "Ambassador" we find the usual crowd of Italian labourers who have never abandoned the precincts of the hotel since our arrival. Motor-cars are speeding along the streets leading to Brooklyn—streets now becoming almost familiar to us. As we approach the airport, we see that it is black with people. Motor-cars in thousands parked in long parallel lines; police on horseback; crowds along the railings and swarming over the sand-dunes; the landing-stage packed with the more privileged spectators. I pass between two lines of marines, who present arms. We say farewell, and promise to return to America next year to unveil the Roman column which the Duce is presenting to Chicago. On the big motor-launch which takes me to my flying-boat are the representatives of the American Army and Navy, as well as Signor Rosso, Signor Grossardi and Mr. Pope, who did so much towards making our reception in New York such an outstanding success, as well as Lino, Nello and Pio, our faithful friends, who have dealt with thousands and thousands of telegrams, and who have so tactfully handled our numerous visitors and the irrepressible multitudes of enthusiastic admirers and autograph-hunters.

When we are within a few yards of the flying-boats a dinghy draws up alongside us to take me aboard. Just

at that moment we get a bulletin saying that there is fog at Shediac, but we hope it will lift. A few strokes of the oars and we are on my ship.

Signor Freedi, of the *Popolo d'Italia*, is my guest. We chat about Italy and the personal interest which the Duce has shown in my comrades and myself. While we are chatting a motor-launch makes towards us with Lieutenant-Colonel Infante, the commander of the base and head of our telegraphic and radio-telephonic services in America, on board. When he is within hearing he calls out : " There is still fog at Shediac."

Ah, well ! We must only wait. An hour passes—a long hour on this stretch of swamp on which the July sun beats down fiercely. Cagan suggests breakfast—a suggestion with which I cordially concur. The breakfast baskets provided by the " Ambassador " are truly marvellous. There is food for twenty in that basket. I take some fruit and cheese and a glass of beer, and I make a present of the rest of the contents of my basket to the boatmen who have brought me alongside the I-Balb.

The hour passes, we learn that the fog is lifting at Shediac. Kimball advises us not to start on the route to Shediac, as to-morrow conditions are sure to improve. I know that my boys are anxious to be off, but there is no reason in running risks. I give orders to disembark. The crews pull wry faces. The idea of returning to New York does not appeal to them. They regard it as a sort of anti-climax. However, I have definitely decided that no unnecessary risks are to be run, and tell them so.

" It seems as though we shall be forced to postpone our departure once again as we did at Orbetello and Reykjavik," says Longo to me. " And had we not had patience at Orbetello and at Reykjavik, we would have come to grief. It is all for the best."

Despite Longo's optimistic vein, however, I feel ill at ease. I return to the hotel and throw myself on the bed in a vain effort to sleep. As usual on the eve of a flight I suffer from insomnia.

In the afternoon I telephone to my wife and children and send off a number of telegrams. Later on I take a stroll in mufti with Pellegrini and another friend to see

the "Empire State Building," the world's biggest sky-scraper. There is a service of three lifts running at a dizzy speed from the street level to the roof, a distance of over 1200 feet. We gaze in rapture at the magnificent panorama beneath us, as we drink a glass of the diluted hogwash which Americans cynically call "near beer." The skyline merges into a haze away towards Long Island, but the fog is lifting in the direction of the Hudson, which is swept by a land breeze. Between the two majestic expanses of water New York stretches away towards the broad lagoon which a slender chain of islands protects against the fury of the ocean.

The topmost storeys of the sky-scrappers seem to assume pallid watery tints and to become more and more cloudy and unreal as they merge into the hazy sky. Unfortunately I am awakened from my reverie by a host of autograph-hunters who have recognised me, and are now swarming around on the roof.

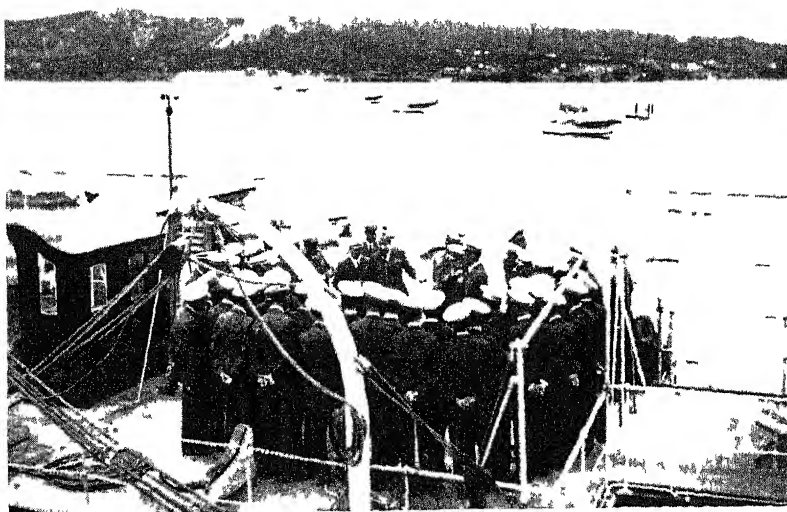
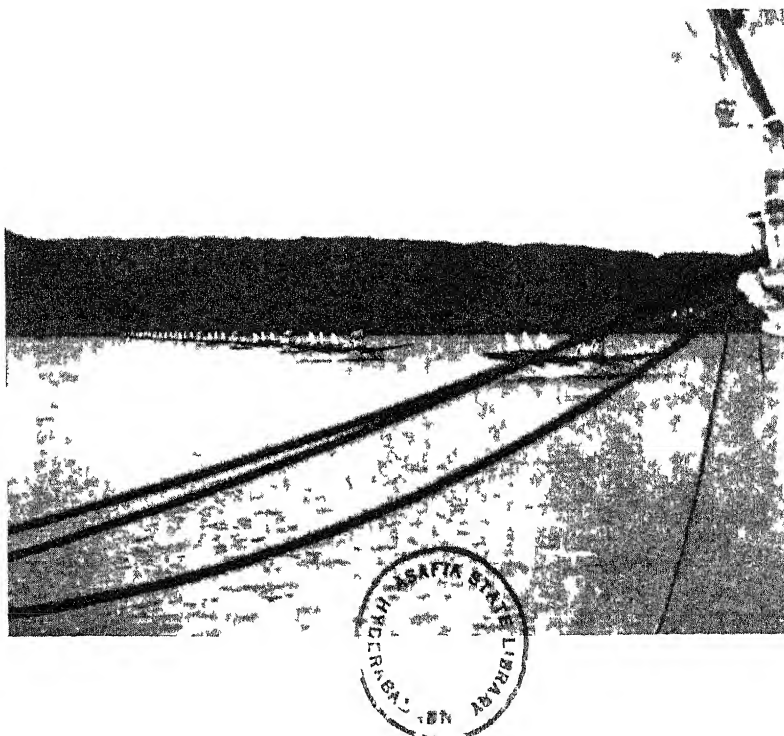
Immediately after dinner I retire to bed.

July 25th. Dawn. There are fewer people to see us off to-day, as I had taken steps to have the rumour widely circulated that I would not start before to-morrow. The result is that we get far more quickly from the hotel to the anchorage, and we are aboard without loss of time. The wind is blowing from the land. For the first time since we left Orbetello I do not lead the take-off, owing to the arrangement of our moorings. I want to avoid protracted preliminary evolutions on the anchorage. I give instructions to a green, a red and a black platoon to take off, and to cruise around in the air until my turn comes. So up they go, and wheel over the surface of the water while they wait for me. And now I take off. Our second ocean flight has started.

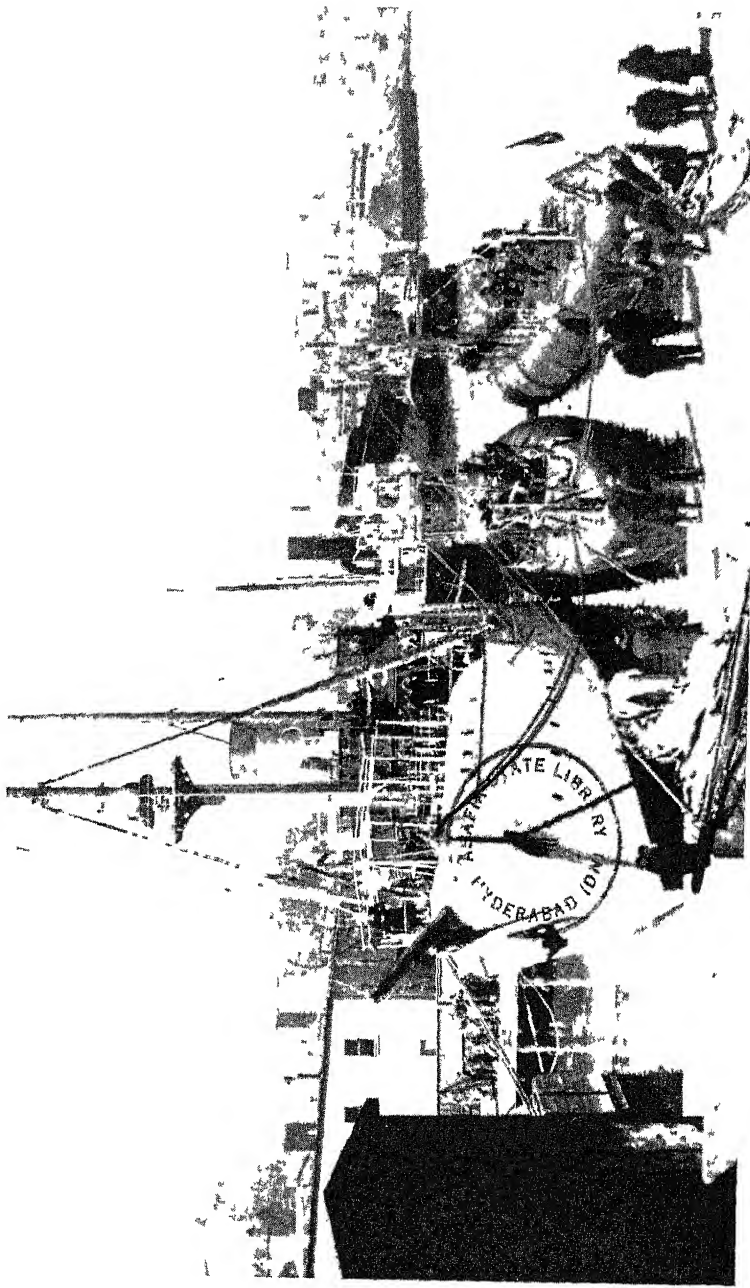
We are in the air. It is 8.13 a.m. by local time, and 2.13 p.m. by Greenwich.

We take a wide circular sweep to the left over our base. Beneath us is the yellowish peninsula of Floyd Bennet. Twelve American aeroplanes are circling in the air above the anchorage as an escort, while our squadron is getting into line for its flight.

We skirt the coast of Long Island, and see the level



THE FLYING BOATS AT SHOAL HARBOUR
BALBO HOLDS COUNCIL WITH HIS PILOTS ON BOARD THE *ITIC* AT SHOAL
HARBOUR



THE U-571 AND THE ITALIAN SUBMARINES AT ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

expanse of the Atlantic which reflects the dazzling rays of the July sun. As we proceed, the surface of the ocean becomes more ruffled, and at Montduck Point, which is the last peak of Long Island, the waves are crashing in foam on the beach. And now the sun has disappeared beneath a curtain of grey fog, while visibility is poor. Yonder is Block Island with its lighthouse. We are nearing land again—the rectangular projection on which stands the town of Newport. We swerve seawards, and at 3.46 p.m. are flying over Gay Head, and can identify its red tower which is marked on our chart. We pass the broad expanse of Providence Bay, dotted with ragged reefs, projecting over the surface of the water in such weird formations that one would fancy a great stretch of land had given way before a sudden onslaught of the ocean. We pass over the graceful little group of the Elizabeth Islands in Buzzards Bay whose shores are deeply indented and whose surface is smooth as that of an inland lake. Another swerve landwards to cut across the long promontory shaped like the horns of an ox, and so past the little village of Provincetown. The clouds are descending lower and lower, as we fly at an altitude of 150 feet over wooded hills dotted with country mansions and intersected with tiny lakes. Unfortunately we are rolling at such a terrific rate that our attention is diverted from the beautiful landscape unfolding before our eyes.

As we approach Massachusetts Bay the sky grows darker. Presently the rain comes down in torrents. Although our altitude is only 150 feet, we cannot see the water any longer. I make towards the coast of Boston as I want to avoid a course which is rather difficult for our squadron to negotiate. But our plight is still worse as we enter the inlet at the base of which is the famous American city whose name is inseparably linked with memories of the War of Independence. Although we are over the harbour now, we cannot see the city. A watery light is diffused over us through the rain-clouds. A rather strong gale is blowing, but we are not alarmed. We know that the disturbance is merely local. As we fly onwards we note that the coast-line is dotted with

little towns. This is one of the most densely-populated regions in America.

Now we can only discern the faintest outlines of the foam-capped sea. The city of Salem is hidden by a black rain-cloud. We are now over Cape Ann, a long, triangular promontory driving boldly into the ocean. Here, as we had foreseen, the rain ceases, and we emerge from the stormy belt. The clouds are scurrying in defeat across the sky. There are at first fitful gleams of sunshine, as the grey masses roll away and vanish, but very soon we are sailing along through an azure sky, and revert once more to our prearranged route.

But just as the weather looks more cheerful, other troubles begin. Aramu informs me that he is using up an inordinate amount of petrol. I enquire about the number of revolutions and the temperature of his engines. Nothing amiss with either. I then have a long discussion about the trouble with Pezzani in the tunnel of the I-Balb. When I say discussion I mean that we exchange views by scrawling notes quickly on scraps of paper. Pezzani says that Aramu must be making a mistake, as he took aboard an extra tin yesterday after the trial start to which we subjected his machine, in view of his trouble in taking off at Reykjavik. That trial, which entailed starting with an abnormally heavy cargo, went off most successfully.

I send the following radio message to Aramu : " Alight, refuel, and start again without wasting a minute."

But our troubles do not end here. I get a message from Gallo that he has to make an enforced descent as he is using up too much oil. Once more I leave the pilot's cabin, and hold a consultation with Pezzani in the tunnel. The conversation, as before, is conducted on scraps of paper. Pezzani, who is generally unerring in his judgments, writes : " The lids of the tins have not been properly screwed down." When I get to Shediach, and inquire into the cause of this accident, Pezzani's view will be proved to be only too correct. Meanwhile I must instruct Gallo also to alight. These mishaps, trivial as they may seem, mar my enjoyment of the view of the picturesque coast of Maine and of the Bay of

Fundy. Aramu's machine alights at Portland and Gallo's in an anchorage belonging to the American Navy, and both resume their flight with all possible speed.

The coast of Maine is bordered by a labyrinth of small islands which serve as breakwaters to beautiful promontories of the mainland, or enclose little bays with deep water rivalling Capri in their azure clearness. Then there are pine-clad hills dotted with chalets and villas in front of which meadow-lands and pastures sweep gracefully down to the sea. And there are also small boats riding at anchor at tiny slipways. We fly over an arm of the sea which is enclosed between the mainland and Grand Manan Island at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. We are just about to enter Canadian skies.

I send the following wireless message to President Roosevelt: "Now that the Atlantic squadron of Italy is saying farewell to the United States, and is crossing the frontier, my thoughts and those of my men turn gratefully to the President of this great and noble country, which had treated us with such hospitality and cordial friendship." I also send messages to General Dern, Secretary of War, to Admiral Swanson, Secretary of the Navy, and to the mayors of New York and Chicago.

The Bay of Fundy, whose bright placid expanse spreads out before us, is scarcely ruffled by the breeze. Leaving behind us on the left a village named Londonderry, we pass right up this magnificent gulf as far as Cape Marigonin, and the beautiful rocky peninsula, on which sits astride the ancient colonial city of St. John, the capital of New Brunswick.

We are now within twenty-five miles of Shediac when we run into a particularly nasty patch of rain-cloud, and are buffeted by squalls, but the sky is again of azure blue, as Shediac with its low-lying green coast stands out against the horizon. I pass at an altitude of 150 feet above Dr. Webster's villa, and see the cannon on the meadow that stretches in front of the hall door. I lead the squadron in a wide circle around the shores of the little bay. Then my platoon gracefully glides towards the surface of the water and comes to anchor amidst a curtain of white foam. Captain Campanelli comes next.

I stay on board my machine until Aramu arrives, after which I go ashore. Gallo is still flying, but he will be here presently. The other twenty-two machines have alighted and are moored.

I see on the landing-stage Signor Petrucci, the consul, Dr. Webster and Mayor Sormani in the centre of a merry throng of villagers. The mayor asks me to cut a ribbon spanning the beginning of the street leading to the city, which has been renamed Balbo Street! I kiss the baby who hands me the scissors, and the little ceremony completed, we have a pleasant, homely tea in Mrs Webster's delightful drawing-room.

Later on, while holding our usual meeting, in a shady nook of the park, to make arrangements for to-morrow's flight, we hear the droning of engines overhead. We look up. It is Gallo flying above us. Now he is alighting. Well, that is good. Now I can enjoy dinner in peace and have a good sleep afterwards. I have now 119 men with me at Shediach. My human freight has increased by leaps and bounds. At New York we took with us two film photographers, eight developers, six civilian workmen, two engineers, Torre and Marescalchi and two mechanics. We have travelled 730 miles at the rate of about 127 miles an hour in five hours and forty-two minutes.

Unfortunately my sleep in Dr. Webster's house is fitful and broken. At dawn Cagna brings me a weather report from Baumann, who is aboard the *Alice*, to the effect that we shall start this very morning, July 26th, the tenth stage of our flight.

I say farewell to my hosts and express the hope that I shall see them soon in Italy. Then we dash for the landing-stage where we get a rousing send-off from our Canadian friends, and from the Canadian aviators who have turned up with two flying-boats to wish us God-speed.

I take some time to puzzle out the correct time. It is 11.30 a.m. Greenwich time, 12.46 p.m. by Rome and 9.46 a.m. by Shediach, which has a special local summer-time of its own. Well, we start at 12.42 p.m. Greenwich mean time. The beautiful Canadian bay gives our machines ample scope for manœuvring, and for this

reason we take off with the maximum of speed and ease.

It is a splendid day. The sky is clear overhead. A delightful calm broods over air and sea with a faint suggestion of a zephyr from the south-west. We are speeding along magnificently. Now we are just flying over Prince Edward Island, and making towards the extreme point of Cape Breton, where I am told many thousands of Italians have settled. We pass along the shores of Northumberland Strait, with its deeply indented coastline in which the sea has waged its warfare of erosion since time immemorial.

At 1 p.m. the I-Rovi signals for permission to alight, as its water pump is out of gear. Well, it cannot be helped. The machine alights at Cape Traverse, about fifty miles from Shediac. I run over the list of spare parts belonging to us at Shediac. I see that it includes an engine. Accordingly I send the following message to Campanelli, who is at Shediac :

“ Machine I-Rovi moored near Cape Traverse facing Victoria. It seems to have met with damage to the water pump of its rear engine. If the flying-boats belonging to the Canadian police are still at Shediac ask them to fly with you to Victoria and get the required spare parts. Keep in touch with me through the medium of the *Alice*.”

A reply comes very promptly. Captain Campanelli has intercepted our message, and is already *en route* for Cape Traverse with a Canadian machine.

Although this trouble is got over more quickly than I had hoped, I am rather preoccupied. These accidents are rather unfortunate. Have we been unduly hasty in overhauling the machines at New York? We have already done 100 hours' flight, and we still have the Atlantic before us. But if other accidents had occurred, as they would have but for our rapid overhauling of the machines at New York, how would we have been able to carry on? I find myself wondering if ill-luck is beginning to dog us. Is not my projected flight to Italy rather rash?

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Although this trouble is got over more quickly than I had hoped, I am rather preoccupied. These accidents are rather unfortunate. Have we been unduly hasty in overhauling the machines at New York? We have already done 100 hours' flight, and we still have the Atlantic before us. But if other accidents had occurred, as they would have but for our rapid overhauling of the machines at New York, how would we have been able to carry on? I find myself wondering if ill-luck is beginning to dog us. Is not my projected flight to Italy rather rash?

also welcomed by Major Ourterbridge, the aide-de-camp of the Governor of Newfoundland, who is accompanied by Mr. Puddester, Secretary of State, Mr. Walsh, Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Mines, Mr. Emerson, Minister of Justice, and Mr. Wisor, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. They have come from Saint John's to Shoal Harbour by special train. The municipal representatives invite me to dine with them in their restaurant-car. I thank them cordially for their invitation, which I have to decline with great regret, as I have arranged to spend the eve of the Atlantic flight with my boys.

The Newfoundland Government Ministers present me with a small silver statue of a caribou—the aboriginal reindeer. I find these Newfoundland people very naive and charming. They seem to belong to the pure Anglo-Saxon stock which has not become diluted by intermarrying with immigrants from other European races. Apparently the very savage desolation of the island has made for its racial purity. Decidedly all those around us are pure-blooded descendants of the English colonists of the fifteenth century.

I now go aboard the *Alice*, where I immediately meet Baumann. After an exchange of greetings, he gives me very vivid details of his experiences. He tells me that his trip from Julianehaab on the whaler which we sent to relieve him was a very perilous one. The bay was blocked up by the breaking of the icefield, while gigantic icebergs were drifting from the north. The whaler boldly worked her way past the icebergs, and after running the gauntlet amongst these formidable obstacles, got to port.

Our boys had a very difficult time of it during the last couple of months, Baumann informs me. Terrible storms had swept down on the bleak island from time to time. On one occasion an Arctic cyclone demolished the mast and antennæ of the radio outfit. It took all the stoicism and patience of Captain Draghelli to cope with the fierce onslaughts of the Arctic blasts from the ocean.

Our machines alight without a hitch in Shoal Harbour. It is an excellent anchorage for the purpose of alighting or taking off, but it is rather extensive and exposed and it would be risky to make a long stay here. In broken

weather whirlwinds sweep down the sides of the greenish blue mountains, making the funnel-shaped inlet of the sea on which our flying-boats are moored exceedingly treacherous. Shoal Harbour then becomes a regular arena where opposing winds tilt at one another.

The *Alice* can only accommodate a certain number of the crews of the squadron. This accounts for the railway carriages which we saw lined up at the wharf. They have a restaurant-car attached for our non-commissioned officers. Our dining-room is in a hut about 800 yards further on up the main road. To get to it we have to pass along a pathway specially made for the occasion, on both sides of which I am astonished to see several tents. I am informed that they have been erected to accommodate people anxious to see us landing and starting. As we pass along some of the campers are busily engaged cooking in the open.

Shoal Harbour consists of a group of some twenty wooden huts, a tiny pier, alongside which runs a railway track, behind which are a telegraph office, a little store which sells the most extraordinary assortment of goods, and a very small inn, which can accommodate three or four travellers at most. The Italian squadron has been the means of increasing the number of huts. A petrol and oil warehouse and a general store have already sprung up as though by magic alongside the pier. There is also a local newspaper, incredible as it may seem—and a most unique one at that—there is only one copy published and exposed for scrutiny at the wicket window of the telegraph office. An employee who incorporates in his own person the functions of editor, sub-editor, reporter and circulation manager, sticks up on the wall from time to time, scraps of paper containing outstanding items of news. And so the inhabitants, if they have any wish to do so, can drop in and hear of the happenings in the big world. Readers are strictly forbidden, however, to fetch home this only available copy of the world's news.

Incidentally, we discover that this place is really not Shoal Harbour, but Clareville. Shoal Harbour is some three miles further on. Still, if we have made a mistake,

it is not worth our while now to change the name of the base.

The landscape is beautiful, with its stretches of emerald green water overhung by hills clad with the typical dwarf fir trees of the northern region of America. The tallest of these trees is about nine feet high. And yet under the pale sky a peculiar inexplicable sadness seems to brood over everything—a sadness that reacts on one's spirits. The seaboard along Trinity Bay is extremely long; you have a sort of Norwegian fjord, but without the majesty of the lofty Norwegian mountains with their green glens and the dazzling glaciers in the background.

We have a very jolly time together. We laugh and joke and sing songs. The hut in which we are assembled is a sort of crude local theatre which the commandant of the base has adapted to suit our comfort. The kitchen is on the stage, and is hidden by the drop curtain. Our improvised dining-room is in the pit. A big scroll in black letters on a white ground over the entrance to the hut runs thus :

“ Oldfellow's Home.”

This is the first time since our stay at Cartwright that we have all met together. We are like a happy family that is reunited after having been sundered for a long time. It is such a delight to be able to speak at our ease and to be free from all conventional formality once more. We discuss among ourselves the details of our imminent return flight, about which we are naturally very pre-occupied.

This is July 26th. To-morrow we expect Rovis to put in an appearance. We shall be busily engaged in refuelling on the two following days. On July 29th we shall be able to leave Shoal Harbour, and on the 30th we shall fly from Valentia to Berre, reaching Rome on July 31st. This will mean a month for the complete flight.

But for the moment we are enjoying physical and mental relaxation, and see the future through rosy-tinted glasses. Pellegrini and myself challenge two of the journalists attached to our expedition to a game of cards, and take a sound beating in a sporting spirit. Our waggish opponents console us by saying that this has

been our first and only set-back in American territory. We shall have our revenge when we get back to Italy.

Next morning Rovis arrives. He had left Victoria at 7.15 a.m., reaching Shoal Harbour at 10.40. He had followed alone along our itinerary, from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Cape Breton and Cabot Strait. He encountered dense banks of fog on the southern coast of Newfoundland, and had splendid weather for the last lap of his flight. Well, so we are all fixed up now and can start preparations for our ocean flight. Our boys are very busy getting rid of superfluous cargo, with the result that when we are starting our total weight will be barely ten tons.

In the course of the past ten days there have been two very fierce storms, one of which nearly did for our whalers. And just now Shoal Harbour is blanketed with fog. For two days running when we awake we see a dense bank of mist which covers the whole bay. From the deck of the *Alice* I cannot see my own flying-boat that is just 120 feet away.

The gist of the despatches that we receive during these days shows that the authorities at Rome are somewhat uneasy about our prospects. Even during our stay in New York I had been strongly advised to adopt the Azores route. Those in favour of it, some of them very earnest and intimate fellow-workers of mine, apparently spoke about it to the Duce. They are afraid of the risks of fog in the northern route. We, however, have a fairly good acquaintance with fog, and our view is that far greater risks are entailed by alighting on the Atlantic with the long ocean swell which would swamp our flat-bottomed boats. We all agree that until August 10th I should adhere to my plan for the Irish route, but after that date, owing to the shortening days, I should be in favour of the Azores. Until August 10th we shall have sufficient hours of daylight for the flight from Shoal Harbour to Valentia without running the risk of alighting at night. It will mean a flight of 250 miles more than the stretch to the Azores, but the extra distance is made up for by the help we shall get from the wind which blows fairly steadily throughout the year in the direction

of Ireland. To make assurance doubly sure I arrange to have the anchorage at Valentia adequately lighted by means of a double row of buoys with electric lights, on the chance of our arriving there when night is drawing on. I ask General Valle to go to Valentia and to keep in constant touch with us. Valle knows the difficulties we have to cope with, as he took part in our previous expedition.

We spend the evening in the mess-room of the *Alice*, playing cards. Pellegrini and I win this time against the journalists. I do my best to look as unconcerned as possible, but I can detect a certain nervousness of expression in the eyes of my comrades, which shows that they are just as preoccupied as I am about our flight. I spend a good while in the chartroom where the meteorological office is installed, discussing the situation with Baumann and with Dr. Di Maio, our brilliant young meteorologist. They both agree that the weather is definitely unfavourable. Summer is drawing to a close, and there is a likelihood of violent storms. Later on conditions may improve, but it is all very uncertain.

To make matters worse, I am feeling ill, but I have no time to worry about my health just now. After all, illness is a luxury which can only be indulged in when one is at leisure. I shall try the effect of aspirin and a strict course of dieting for my feverishness.

July 31st. The outlook is definitely favourable to-day. It seems that atmospheric conditions on the ocean have decidedly improved. We shall not have ideal weather, but we shall be able to fly the ocean without running the risk of violent storms. I call a meeting of the pilots, and order them to be ready to embark at 3 a.m. I spend a sleepless night—my usual vigil on the eve of flight.

The crews are aboard at dawn. Conditions still hold good on the Atlantic, but there is a persistence of the depression, moving eastwards, which has obtained in mid-ocean for the past two days.

Meanwhile another depression is advancing from Labrador. If we don't start to-day we shall most decidedly be weather-bound for two days. What are we to do? I

can read in the eyes of the officers who are leaving the *Alice* for their machines an eagerness to start. Some of them urge me not to postpone the flight for another day.

"Your Excellency," whispers Longo, "don't pay any heed to what others suggest to you. Follow your own counsel."

I decide to wait for the latest weather bulletin, which arrives from a whaler about 600 miles off the Irish coast. It is indeed a very disconcerting report.

"I really don't know what to advise," says Baumann, as we brood over the report together. "The situation is very uncertain."

I scan the meteorological chart carefully, and decide that we shall not start to-day. A piercing whistle from the *Alice's* siren, which reverberates all over the bay, indicates to my boys that the flight has been postponed. I retreat to the cabin, as I cannot bear to see the look of disappointment in the eyes of my officers. Cagna follows me in a couple of minutes.

"You acted very wisely," he says in reassuring tones. But when I look at him I see that he too is depressed, although he is trying to make the best of matters.

I awake from a very fitful sleep at midday, and look out of the window. The flying-boats are being pitched about by a violent storm. The anchorage, which had been perfectly calm during the previous days, is now in a terrific ferment. Foam-capped waves, six feet high, are rolling along under the lowering sky. We have to reinforce the moorings at the buoys, as our flying-boats are pitching and rolling at very dangerous angles. As it is impossible to get alongside them with motor-launches, our boys have to plunge into the sea when they are within about twenty or thirty yards of the machines, clamber on board astern, and reinforce the hawsers.

The reports we get from the Atlantic are steadily getting worse. The whalers state that the waves are running mountains high. The two submarines also have been fearfully buffeted. All the vessels have been forced to abandon their positions, and to fly for shelter.

A whaler, whose radio-telegraphic code is "AVD,"

suddenly ceases to function in the afternoon. It is in charge of Major Marini, who had also taken part in our South Atlantic expedition. After a couple of hours the "AVD" reports once more. We learn that the vessel has been seriously damaged, and that the gale has wrecked her aerial.

We lose touch with her again for some time, after which, with frequent ominous gaps of silence, she gives us very fragmentary scraps of information about the increasing violence of the Atlantic storm. Waves are sweeping over her bridge, and her engine-room is threatened any moment with flooding. And then suddenly there is no further news from her. The *Alice* calls again and again—all to no purpose. Neither can any other vessels nor the stations along the coast get in touch with her.

Night draws on. In vain does our radio send out the persistent call:—"AVD," "AVD." No reply. And so the long anxious hours of the night drag on. The three letters "A.V.D." keep reverberating through my brain. At length, with dawn, we learn that the whaler had her aerial smashed again by the storm, and that owing to the tremendous sea that was running it was impossible to repair it.

I dread to think what might have happened had we started yesterday. We would have had to battle first with a gale running 65 miles an hour, and afterwards with a dense fog as we approached our anchorage at Valentia. And my mind goes back to the first stage of our South-Atlantic flight, when we encountered a cyclone which ended its mad career by wrecking the harbour at Algiers.

We must have only patience. Conditions are showing signs of improvement. The Atlantic has settled down considerably, and the sky is getting clearer in certain areas. The Atlantic anti-cyclone of 770 millimetres is stretching from the Azores to Ireland with a maximum of 773 millimetres at Valentia. In the vicinity of our prospective anchorage the wind is moderating, and there is a slight sea. We shall have to expect fogs on the ocean, but only intermittently, so that, taking every-

thing into consideration, the outlook is favourable. We are already feeling quite cheerful when we get a report from the Irish meteorological office. The fog at Valentia lifted at sunset.

Professor Eredia and General Valle are in favour of starting. They say that it is the unusually high pressure in Ireland that caused the fog to lift. Baumann swears that there will be no fog at Valentia this evening on account of the inevitable land breeze. I concur with his view. I have unbounded trust in this keen-eyed little German scientist, who is so confident in his forecasts. I make a bet of a hundred dollars to one with a journalist that Baumann is right. And yet despite my trust in him, I postpone our flight once more.

And now we have a swift exchange of telegrams with Valentia. The Kerry fishermen fully concur with Eredia's forecast. They say that the phenomenon is a very familiar one. But supposing they are all mistaken in their prophecy! Well, if I had followed their advice I would have made a most successful flight, a regular scamper across the ocean, and we would have anchored under a beautifully clear sky. But the wraith of a possible fog on our arrival in Kerry arises before my mind. Valentia is to the rear of a little island. The anchorage is a small sheet of water surrounded by hills with which my pilots are not familiar. Alighting in a fog would mean disaster, swift and irreparable.

The high pressure is likely to persist for some days, with all the reactions I have already mentioned. We must get out of the blind alley into which we have entered. I send a radio message to the whalers giving them instructions to proceed to the posts which we have decided upon in connection with the Azores route. I also send details about our prospective change of route to the Press, and I write a report to the Duce. I also make an appointment with the submarines and the *Biglieri* to meet me in the harbour of St. John's in Newfoundland, where they have to call for fresh provisions before taking post along the new route. I cannot say that the squadron heard my decision with enthusiasm. Still, it could not be helped.

Next day among a number of other telegrams from Rome I received the following one from the Duce :

"Now that you have definitely decided upon the Azores route, wait patiently for a favourable day which, with a countryman's weather sense, I know cannot be far off. Do not be impatient, and do not hurry things unduly. The main thing is that you should all reach home safely, and I feel confident that you will. God-speed your flight. MUSSOLINI."

The Duce's optimism is most opportune. Our plans will have all been arranged by August 9th. Before that date our floating meteorological service will not be in full working order. So we have a few days before us.

Early next day I go by train with twenty officers and the journalists to St. John's. I feel somewhat depressed, but Monelli takes my mind off my trouble by pointing out as we speed along historical land-marks dating back to the days when the island was called "Helluland," i.e. "Land of the bare rocks," and to the pioneering work of Sir George Calvert, later Lord Baltimore, Richard Whithorne, the famous Devon mariner, who was the first to travel right through the island, and Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who landed with the letters patent from Queen Elizabeth. On we go amidst hills covered with clumps of stunted fir-trees, fjords, lakes and, now and then, a house. There is a sameness about the whole landscape which becomes very monotonous.

A few miles before reaching St. John's we pass by the bay in which the Do-X is berthed. At length the train, after crawling along for six hours at a snail's pace, pulls up at the capital of Newfoundland. It is truly a beautiful town with a distinctly Nordic stamp about it. Its houses, made of timber, are for the most part of dazzling whiteness, and stretch away from the sea along the slopes of the hills.

The Prime Minister and other representatives of the Government of the island are among the large crowd that welcomes us with vociferous cheers. It strikes us as very strange that in this remote northern island, where living conditions are simple almost to primitive

ness, the people are very keen on conventional standards in ceremonial receptions. The Government representatives and all the leading citizens who form the reception committee are frock-coated and silk-hatted. Still, this convention is a mere veneer which vanishes the moment we start chatting. These islanders are charmingly naive and natural.

The Newfoundland Government has issued a series of postage-stamps in commemoration of our expedition. They are rectangular, and have a typical Labrador landscape on a yellow background with the inscription underneath "Labrador—the land of gold," while at the top is printed "1933, General Balbo's Flight." The stamp is valued at four and a half dollars, and the collectors are already very busy raking in as many of them as they can lay hands on.

I have been invited to unveil a shield to a famous Newfoundland pioneer. A visit is also arranged for to-morrow to Cabot's Tower, where a new Marconi station will be opened. Members of the Government will subsequently be present at a luncheon in the hotel, which is a splendid building.

As it is time to have my beard trimmed, I send for a barber. He is rather puzzled about tackling it, as he has not been in the habit of dealing with beards. These sturdy northern people are all clean-shaven.

In the evening I dine with our sailor boys who tell me their experiences. They spent many an anxious night cruising amid icebergs with the aid of a searchlight. They entered Boston Harbour under such a dense bank of fog that the pilot refused to come aboard. The consequence was that Della Campana had to take the risk of picking his way to his berth in an unknown port under weather conditions that made the local pilots quail. He went on to tell me of the terrible seas he had encountered during the past week. Mountainous waves lashed by fierce gales, alternated with fogs which descended to the water's level.

A steamer, crowded with American tourists, arrives in the harbour. The visitors make for the hotel *en masse*, and after a little while a dance is organised, in which the

Italian airmen vie with the sailors in their skill and physical endurance as interpreters of the mazes of tangos and fox-trots.

The unveiling of the monument takes place next morning in a dense fog which presently changes into a downpour of rain. We next drive to Cabot's Tower, which is on an eminence overlooking the harbour. We are enveloped in such a dense blanket of fog that we cannot see the hilly road which the car is climbing. When we reach the tower, a squat lighthouse, which also serves as a Marconi station, I send Signor Marconi a message, in which I say that we Italians are proud of the fact that their countryman has linked the ends of the world together by his wonderful invention.

From beneath, muffled by the grey haze, come at regular intervals the ghostly peals of a fog-bell at the entrance to the harbour. In my morbid frame of mind I imagine that it is calling on the spirits of the sailors who are wandering over the desolate seas. The eerie fancy I have conjured up sends a shudder along my spine.

At luncheon the Prime Minister talks about the many charms of his desolate island to which he is extremely devoted. And after we have drunk toasts to King George, King Victor Emmanuel and the Duce, the master of ceremonies proposes my health. Whereupon the Prime Minister turns towards me and, raising his glass, sings in a lusty baritone voice: "For he's a jolly good fellow." But he has hardly finished the first line of this rousing old English drinking-song when everyone around the table joins in. My mind harks back immediately to a day when I heard it sung on a British warship in the Solent when a toast was drunk to Waghorn on his winning the Schneider Trophy. I recollect also that a crowd of Englishmen sang it when I arrived in Natal with the South Atlantic squadron.

I pay a visit to the two submarines and the *Bigliervi* under a heavy downpour, after which I give orders that all the sailors are to assemble in a big shed alongside the docks. I shake hands with them individually, and in a brief address I express my appreciation of the stoicism and courage with which they have faced the dangers

and hardships of their protracted vigil on the wild and desolate Atlantic. I then go aboard the *Biglieri* again and, after drinking a cup of coffee made as only Italians can make it, autograph innumerable photographs for the sailors.

We get a rousing send-off at the station from the Prime Minister and the other members of his Cabinet. Dr. Emerson, a Newfoundlander, who is a great authority on Dante and Petrarch, replies to my farewell speech in faultless Italian.

We chat about home topics in far-off old Italy as the train speeds along, and I show my companions the pair of seal-skin slippers that I have bought for my little toddler. We are all rather sleepy when the train pulls up at Shoal Harbour at 4 a.m. The *Alice* is a good three-quarters of a mile further on, and a dense fog has blotted out the landscape and there is no sign of dawn as yet. My comrades decide to hang about until daylight, but I grope my way with difficulty along the path through the woods to the wharf where the *Alice* is berthed.

Much to our regret, the Irish route is now out of the question. We have definitely decided for the Azores. We shall not be able to count upon the practically steady wind which would have considerably eased our task. Even under the most favourable circumstances we shall have to deal with an adverse wind. But our most difficult problem will be our alighting on a low-lying coast with very scant shelter. Furthermore, our squadron will be divided, since there is no harbour on the Azores that would afford anchorage for twenty-four flying boats. I shall alight at Ponta Delgada with fifteen machines, and General Pellegrini will alight an hour previously at Horta in Fayal Island with the other nine. To make provision against any accidents that may happen during our flight I decide to take with us the few reserve pilots, i.e. the two I took with me from Europe and the two who met us in America, the eight mechanics, a chief engineer and the film photographer who did such splendid work in New York and Chicago.

The departure had been fixed for August 9th, but on the eve of the 7th we learn that there is a north wind

blowing across the Azores which will continue for the next twenty-four hours. Horta and Panta will be sheltered, and the sea will be calm. Consequently we shall start even if the whalers shall not have arrived at their new positions.

I spend the night of August 7th discussing the weather bulletins with Baumann and Di Maio. At 3.30 a.m. I order reveille to be sounded. Immediately there is an air of bustling life—nay, of gaiety aboard the *Alice*. The searchlight aboard the vessel and a waning moon do battle with the darkness, and an opalescent glow in the east heralds the approach of the dawn. We see the silvery outlines of the twenty-four machines with intervals of 100 yards between each two.

The motor-launches move off from the wharf in the magic silence of breaking day. All my boys are wearing their black shirts under their uniforms. They will continue to wear them all the way to Rome.

We say farewell to Ilari, to the officers of the *Alice*, and to the journalists who are going to Red Hill, an eminence overlooking the whole bay, to see the take-off. All the inhabitants of Clareville are only on the top of the hill.

It is 7.35 p.m., by Greenwich time, as Cagna starts the engines. At first we cannot see the surface of the water, nor can we trace the point where sea and shore meet. But very soon the sky gets brighter, and we can follow the contours of the coast-line and the outlines of the hills that overhang it. But the horizon is blurred and hazy. We can only make an approximate guess as to outline. There is no time to be lost. Off we go !

CHAPTER XX

FATAL CRASH AT THE AZORES

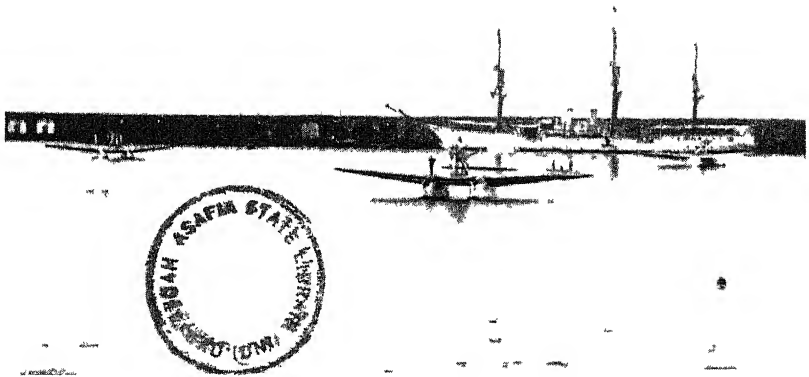
THE moorings are cast, and my machine swings around a little towards the open sea, outside the sheltered stretch of water, in order to cut across the bay at its widest part. Rather high waves are running, but the south wind is blowing at from 12 to 15 miles an hour, which will help us to take off. Now we are midway through the bay; just a half wheel, and we have the wind ahead, Biseo and Questa are at their posts. Our engines are running very freely; a quick jerk and the flying-boat tilts upward a few seconds, despite our total weight of four tons. Now she is skimming swiftly along the water and her flat keels are bumping heavily against the crests of the waves. Our speed increases from 62 to 70 miles an hour; now we are doing 78. When we reach 80 there is a dull thud, and the machine rises from the water and sails along at an altitude of 30 feet. I give a sigh of relief. The cool air blowing around me gives me a sense of freedom and relief. I feel as though I had just shaken off a nightmare. It took us exactly 46 seconds to take off—a record performance. In a few seconds we climb to 300 feet, and thence by stages to 900 and 1200 feet. Now we can forge right ahead. We make towards Cape Split, cutting across the hills, and almost touching their summits in preference to wheeling round towards the mouth of the bay. We increase our altitude to 1500 feet, and thence gradually to 1800, 2100, and finally 2400 feet, at which height we then drive straight ahead. The sky is evenly divided into two great zones, one suffused with light, the other lowering. But presently the rays of the dawn encroach upon the gloomy hemisphere, and the whole horizon is suffused with delicate

emerald tints, which soon merge into a crimson that deepens every minute. Just 21 minutes after our start we are passing Cape Split, America's last outpost.

I see a gleam of flame in the east. For a brief second I imagine that the crimson sun just peeping over the horizon is a ship on fire. Immediately sea and sky reflect the gleam of the slowly emerging globe of flame. The foam on the wave crests assumes ensanguined tints, while the rosy hills of clouds suggest the tones and contours of Byzantine cathedrals.

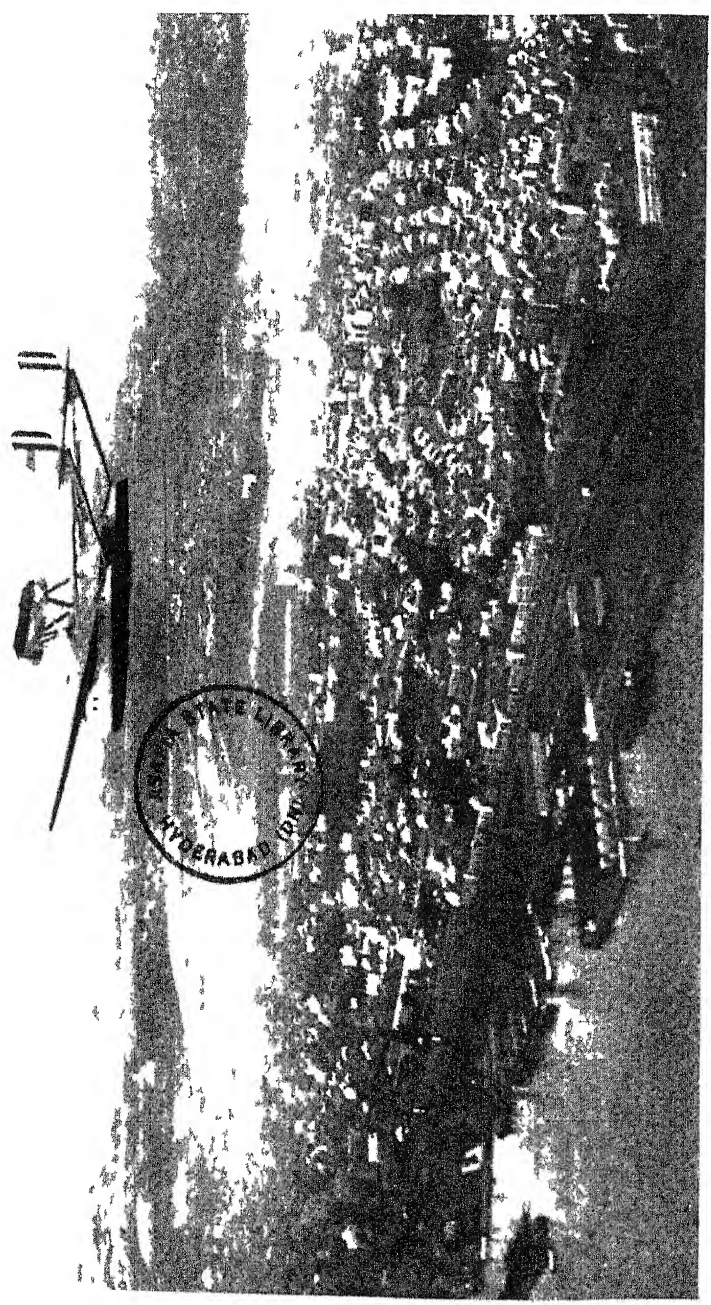
It is 8.11 a.m. I have just got a radio message stating that three minutes ago the last platoon got away without a hitch. Beneath, the sea is now quite calm. The air is delightfully clear, and the blue sky merges into a horizon which at its extremest verge has a faint cloudiness which gradually shades off from silvery to roseate tints. Perhaps it is just a haze that is the harbinger of fine weather—an exhalation from the ocean when the sun smiles on its surface. But it is very foolish to hope that the banks of Newfoundland, only too well known to all mariners, could be absolutely free of fog. After a lapse of five minutes, i.e., at 8.16 a.m., this faint shading along the horizon, which, owing to the beautiful dawn, we had looked upon as a good omen, proves to be exactly the opposite. Masses of white fog roll menacingly upward, and encroach upon the expanse of clear sky. We keep at our altitude of 2400 feet, as at first we are out of range of the fog at this height. But it gets more and more dense, and after a little while mounts higher and higher. To escape it, we climb to 3600 feet. I keep in constant touch with the squadron, which is following in perfect formation. I give instructions about altitude and speed, and get reassuring reports about the running of the engines. The accident to the I-Rovi had given me a very anxious time, but I feel confident now that everything is ship-shape.

Flying above the fog in this manner is terribly monotonous, but the going is smooth and easy. A gloriously bright sun is gleaming in an azure sky; beneath us is a white, woolly expanse. Owing to the intense glare we are wearing sun-glasses.



THE RECEPTION AT PONTA DELGADA
THE FLYING BOATS AT PONTA DELGADA

VIEW FROM THE TOWER - ALCOCK TOWER



And so the second and third hours of our flight pass by. Just two minutes before our fourth hour begins, we see a rent in the woolly pack, and a glimpse of the blue ocean below. I see a vague shape on the bright surface of the water ; it looks like a steamer making for the north-north-east. I get out my field glasses, but just as I have focused them, the gap in the bank of fog closes once more. It strikes me that we are not flying over fog now, that these are just low-lying clouds, and that the fog has cleared off for some time from the surface of the sea. Probably it is quite clear below to an altitude of 150 feet. But is it worth while making the experiment ? We are doing splendidly as it is up here.

At 12.15 p.m. there are further gaps in the white pack beneath us—deep wells of clear air at the bottom of which we see the surface of the ocean. Again and again the phenomenon is repeated. The clear view that we get between these gaps makes us realise to what a height we have climbed. Presently the fog vanishes ; we just see isolated compact clouds. We have now done 625 miles, and are well outside the zone of the notorious Newfoundland fog-banks.

At 12.29 p.m. a cloud beneath us suddenly divides like a curtain. We see in the water a black mass which is distinctly outlined. It is our submarine, with Della Campana, and those fine sailor boys whom I met at St. John's in Newfoundland. I plane down a little, and I ask Pezzani to drop astern, in a small parachute, the letter from Della Campana's daughter which Cagna had forgotten to pack with my belongings when we were leaving for St. John's.

We plane down beneath the clouds to an altitude of 1800 feet, but we find ourselves in a belt of sea-fog and high wind. We decide that it is better to climb again. Our engines accelerate by fifty revolutions, and here we are again at 1.15 p.m. in a clear atmosphere at 4800 feet. The squadron is following with clock-work precision, and everything is ship-shape with all the platoons. I wonder if we shall find things so easy right to the end. So far we have only covered a small stretch of the vast and treacherous ocean.

Another dense mass of cloud is sweeping towards us. But unlike the white, woolly pack we ran into recently, this one is of leaden hue and is drifting at a great height, and has all the appearance of a hurricane cloud. We are actually in the cyclone zone which Baumann pointed out to me this morning on the map. It must be about 190 miles in diameter, so that we shall have to battle with it for an hour and a half. After consultation with Cagna I decide that it is better to fly as low as possible.

We plane down, but when we are at 150 feet the horizon is hidden by a black wall of cloud. We must climb once more. Apparently during a considerable portion of our flight we shall be alternately climbing and descending. I warn the other planes of the platoon to adopt extended formation as the clouds are gathering in heavier and heavier masses above us. Up we go through them. It is just blind flying. From 2400 feet we climb to 3000. The clouds are now ink-black. Our machine pinks and tosses, and violent vibrations thrud it. Fitful flashes of fire like gleaming swords dart through the inky mass that envelops us. We have run into a thunderstorm in the very heart of the cyclone zone. To escape it we mount still higher. We reach 3300 feet, and after that, by stages, from 3600 feet to 4500. It is all to no avail. Even at this height there is an absolute black-out above, beneath and around us. Well, there is nothing for it but to climb still higher. Up and up we go, heedless of the ominous pinking and tossing. We must get out of this ebon murk sometime if we keep on climbing. This blind flying cannot go on indefinitely. We touch 8100 feet; here, at last, the atmosphere is clear. We presently find out to our dismay, however, that we have merely reached a corridor between one huge bank of cloud and another. When I realise our plight I promptly send a message to all platoons, ordering those who have not as yet climbed to remain near the surface of the ocean. It is a regular hell up here. We are all the time flying through black masses of storm-cloud banked one over another. We are now doing 12,000 feet.

The *Count of Savoy* hails us, and tells us that she is having splendid weather. That is easily explained.

She is travelling in a more southerly direction, and it is bright down there. This mad careering among the clouds goes on for some minutes. Then slowly the black curtain divides, and through the rent we see a beautiful calm sea. We start to plane down slowly.

It is 3 p.m. Baumann was right. The clouds actually covered the area which he had predicted. Only they were exceptionally high, and when we had been going at the altitude of 12,609 feet it was quite black above us to a further height of 3600 feet, and the last strata merged with the highest cirrus clouds in the sky. After calling the roll, and finding that all the squadrons are following me, I send to Captain Lena, commander of the *Count of Savoy*, the following message which almost immediately afterwards was sent to all the American and European papers :—

“ It is 3.45 p.m. by Greenwich time now. Please excuse me for not having replied before to your welcome wireless message. But up to half an hour ago I was kept exceedingly busy, and I could not divert my attention for a moment from the job I had in hand. Furthermore, I wished to reserve our wireless service for the time exclusively for keeping in touch with my boys. On the Cape Split—Horta route, exactly between the 40th and 35th meridian, we encountered a depression accompanied by clouds which extended from the surface of the ocean to more than 15,000 feet up. Under the illusion that it would be clear at 3000 or 6000 feet up, I kept the whole squadron careering for an hour among gigantic black clouds illuminated only by fitful darts of forked lightning. But now at last we have emerged over an expanse of ocean that looks like an Italian sea, and we are sailing along calmly. Within an hour's time I shall have doubled Flores.

“ Please do me the favour of telephoning to my wife (City 45, 255) and tell her that I am well and on my way home. Cordial greetings to yourself, your staff, your crew and passengers. Long live Mussolini, at whose behest we are travelling the Atlantic skies.

GENERAL BALBO.”

I receive another message wishing us God speed from the Italian steamer *Valprato*, but she does not give us her position. I also receive others later on from national steamers *en route* for America and Europe. Apparently they are listening in to us all over the ocean to-day.

There is a moderate sea running. It is just a little choppy, but the long steep rollers make me shudder as I think of the anchorage ahead of us. I drop down to 150 feet to observe the sea more carefully, and then forge ahead at that altitude. After a bit I see two enormous whales on the surface of the ocean, which vanish suddenly as we approach.

Every little while I glance around to see how the other machines of my platoon are progressing. After some time I observe with dismay that *Questa* seems to have vanished completely from the sky. I am terribly worried and send a radio message to him right away. To my great relief he replies. He is on his way, but is a considerable distance behind us. I send him a further message urging him to hurry up.

At 3.50 p.m., we are right over one of our whalers, which is flying the Italian flag, while eight men on her bridge are waving their arms with frenzied enthusiasm. And once more my heart beats faster as I see my country's colours.

Now we are approaching the Azores. I make a bet with Cagna that I shall see the first outlines of land before he does. He keeps his eyes steadily riveted on the horizon for a long while. At length he gives a shout of triumph and points with his finger towards a little headland, which is just slightly darker in hue than the sea and sky. It is Corvo Island, the first one of the archipelago to show us its profile. Now we proceed more slowly. Very soon we see Flores also, and at 4.50 p.m. we are sailing along triumphantly between the two islands.

The going is quite good now, but we have been so many hours flying that we are quite weary. The sky is partially overcast and there is a long swell on the sea. Visibility is good.

At 5.19 p.m., we fly over a tanker making towards the

south-west. It seems a phantom ship to us as it makes no signal, nor does it make any attempt to recognise the courtesy which we have shown it by going two miles out of our way to fly over it. There is not even a dog on the bridge to greet us! We scan the vessel's stern for her national flag. She does not fly one. Cagna insists that she is a Yugoslav craft, but I don't agree with him. The sailors of Yugoslavia are Dalmatians and Adriatic folk. They would certainly salute us!

At 5.30 p.m., we get our first glimpse of Fayal Island, with its houses like bits of rock dotted along its green precipitous hill-sides, and at 5.57 we fly over Horta. Lofty sterile mountains, dotted here and there with tropical vegetation. Small snowy-white towns nestling in the shelter of the valleys that sweep down to the sea. Pellegrini will alight here with his own platoon and the two others that I have entrusted to him. I shall go ahead to Ponta Delgada. Yes, these roadsteads are too small to accommodate our twenty-four machines. I can see that at a glance very clearly as I survey them from the air. We shall follow the precedent of naval squadrons which frequently berth their vessels in separate harbours.

Another hour's flight, and the island of São Miguel appears on the sky-line. And just at the same moment I get a radio message informing me of the safe mooring of Pellegrini's nine machines at Horta. A fresh breeze is blowing, but luckily it is from the north. Visibility is excellent. The sea, except where it has been sheltered by the land, has been getting somewhat choppy since we passed Fayal. Still we can only hope for the best.

At last we are at Ponta Delgada, a little seaport nestling amid green thickets that seem to luxuriate everywhere. It is gaily decked with flags and bunting.

I send the following radio message to the various machines:—"Pilots, you will establish a record by anchoring at the Azores. Remember this, and keep your nerve." I also give orders for immediate refuelling after alighting, and we make two wide circular sweeps over the stretch of water on which we are to alight. Then we plane down, clearing the narrow harbour. Now

we have to be extremely careful. We proceed slowly along the water, and slacken our speed as much as possible. A wave comes along. A few revolutions and down we go! We strike the water gently, and the wave in our wake lifts us on its crest, but does not cause us to bound off again into the air. We glide along the water towards our buoy.

Questa and Biseo have also alighted magnificently. Standing on the wing, I watch through my field-glasses the others coming to anchor. They all alight gracefully, yet very cautiously. And at last the fifteenth machine is moored. Again our twenty-four flying-boats have crossed the ocean in safety. I am so happy that I shake hands with everybody on my machine.

It is now 7.20 p.m. Our machines have kept up the splendid average speed of 145 miles an hour. A motor-launch draws up alongside us with Lieutenant Donnelly, the commander of the base, aboard. He is an Orbetello officer, who has carried out faithfully the task assigned to him in every detail.

We see in the harbour a silver-coloured training vessel, the *Sarmiento*, and one of our four whalers which will now be unable to start, as our flying-boats have thoroughly blocked up the narrow roadstead. The whaler is due to start for the new stretch of ocean which we have to tackle to-morrow. Well, it cannot be helped. We shall have to forego weather reports for the other 940 odd miles ahead of us.

I go ashore with Longo, Cagna and Pezzani. Sirens scream, bells peal and the people swarming around the harbour, cheer to their heart's content. Thousands of rockets burst in the sky, and salutes of artillery reverberate among the hills. The Governor, accompanied by the leading representatives of the civil and military authorities, gives me a hearty welcome. An infantry unit presents arms.

The Governor greets us personally with the warm-hearted ebullience typical of the Portuguese race. The crowd around us grows bigger and bigger every moment; and, as we pass through the chief thoroughfare of the town to reach the Governor's palace, flowers are showered

in our path from all sides, making a regular carpet under our feet. And what masses of beautiful blooms. Our warm-hearted hosts must have despoiled all the flower-beds in the town and the magnificent gardens along the mountain sides to pay tribute to us. As we move along the masses of flowers beneath us pile up more and more, while the volume of cheering becomes more and more vociferous. Those generous islanders must have lungs of leather as well as hearts of gold !

"It is hard to realise that there are so many people in Ponta Delgada," I remark to the Governor, a genial man of about forty.

"They are not all Ponta Delgada folk," he replies with a merry laugh. "Why, the whole population of the island is here to-day."

We are nearly smothered in flowers by the time we reach the Governor's palace. In response to the wild cheering of the people outside we have to appear on the balcony again and again. When at length the tumult dies down somewhat, I seize the opportunity to send a report to the Duce, and to write a few telegrams for the press. I am a rather poor hand with the typewriter, but with the help of Pezzani, I manage to get through the work. We also decipher a long coded message and reply to it !

At 11 a.m. by local time we have luncheon in the big dining-room of the palace with leading representatives of the Government. The harbour-master, who has lived for six months at Genoa, speaks Italian fluently. At 12.30 my hosts request us to visit a theatre where the audience expect to meet us. On our arrival, all present leap to their feet, and greet us with prolonged outbursts of applause. National anthems are sung, and a famous Portuguese orator delivers a brief address in which he pays a tribute to New Italy, to the Duce and to us.

On our return to the palace I am so utterly exhausted that I throw myself on the bed. I just kick off my shoes unbutton my tunic, and fall into a sound sleep.

I am awake at 3 a.m. At dawn I get up with a terrible headache. I hunt for the little medicine case which my

wife had packed with my belongings, and pick out a bottle of aspirin.

After consultation with Pellegrini I decide to start at 7 a.m. by Greenwich time. I learn that the sea is fairly calm at Horta. At Ponta Delgada big black clouds are piling up to the south of the roadstead, the forerunners of a fierce storm. We must get away before the weather breaks.

After acknowledging the farewell cheers of the kindly islanders, who since yesterday had kept their positions stoically along the waterfront, I shake hands with the Governor and his entourage, and at 6.50 a.m. our motor-launch pushes off. I give instructions through the megaphone regarding the order in which the various platoons are to take off. I decide that they are to start in accordance with their positions in the anchorage, in order to avoid towing manœuvres which might turn out risky in the narrow compass of the little port. Two other platoons start before mine. They go through their evolutions splendidly. The machines get up speed under shelter of the mole, and after they have glided a short distance on their keels over the sea, I see the first thin line of air between them and the water—a faint blue line.

Still the ascent from the surface is difficult for them, much more so than it seems to me as I look on. In the first few yards of their flight the machines are bumped severely, and it takes very dexterous manœuvring to prevent serious trouble. Yet each flying-boat weighs only two and a half tons.

Now it is the turn of the black platoon. Questa takes off first, and we follow. We grit our teeth and keep our eyes open. There is no trace of my headache now. A quick dash along the water, followed by a sharp wrench—and we are in the air! I make a wide sweep over the harbour in order to give the machines that have already taken off time to get into their proper alignment. I watch the machines one by one as they shoot along the water, leaving in their wake two long furrows of foam. Then suddenly I see a sight that makes me dizzy with horror. A flying-boat has barely cleared the mole when a

column of water shoots up in front of it and almost hides it from me for a moment. Two or three seconds later I see the machine lying on its back, while rowing-boats and motor-launches hurry to the scene. I send out frenzied inquiries, but five long agonising minutes elapse, which seem a century to me, before I get the details. The I-Rani has crashed. Captain Ranieri and Sergeants Cremaschi and Boveri are suffering from bruises, and Lieutenant Squaglia from shock. With the first realisation of the facts everything goes black before my eyes for a moment, and I am in utter despair. I am well aware that nobody is to blame—that it is just one of those sudden and irreparable blows of fate that fall to the lot of airmen. But it seems too cruel that such a disaster should befall us when we are practically at our own doorstep.

Thank God, nobody has been killed. But our fond hope of returning to Rome with my twenty-four machines has been rudely dispelled. To think that this should be the reward of our long hours of anxious watching and waiting at various stages of our flight, culminating in twelve days of caution weighing up our position in Shoal Harbour!

Longo informs me that the anchorage is strewn with the wreckage of the flying-boat, with the result that his platoon, the green one, which always brings up the rear of our squadron, is blockaded in Ponta Delgada. It is impossible for his three machines to take off. I give him instructions to have the anchorage cleared immediately, to ask the Governor and Lieutenant Donnelly, the commandant of the base, to look after the injured men, and to follow us as soon as possible.

It is now 8.2 a.m. The sea is slightly choppy. Scattered all over the sky are clouds about 1500 feet up, and there is a brisk north wind blowing towards us from the glens and peaks of São Miguel. We look forward to a good deal of pinking and tossing.

We climb swiftly through the clouds to 3000 feet. I enquire about Pellegrini. He is *en route* with his nine machines. All told now, there are twenty machines actually under way. One is wrecked, and three are held

up at São Miguel. Now that we have a fairly definite idea of our sorry plight, I send a long message to the Duce giving him details of our disaster.

The scattered clouds climb higher, but so do we—it is a race between us for the conquest of the blue sky. At 9.35 a.m. we have reached 6000 feet, and at 10.58 we touch 7100 feet. The dense heavy mass beneath us looks like a white table-land with a constantly shifting level. We forge ahead in a clear sky above this erratic plateau of cloud-land.

At last I get news about Longo's squadron. He has taken off successfully, and is following in our rear.

When will this sea of clouds end? It has just struck me now that while crossing the Atlantic I have only occasionally caught fitful glimpses of the water. Those who love to gaze in rapture on the mighty rolling ocean, would be greatly disillusioned if they could be prevailed upon to fly it. Perhaps in the year 2000, when most travellers will cross the Atlantic in swift planes at a height of 60,000 feet, it will be taken as a very commonplace phenomenon not to see the water.

It is 11.40 a.m. The clouds are beginning to break up, and now an extraordinary optical delusion greets us on our right, an optical delusion which looks more and more like concrete reality as it develops. A huge bank of cloud divides in halves. Two perpendicular smooth walls, each about 7500 feet high, enclose a valley some four miles broad. At the base of the valley is a marvellous chiaroscuro effect of a stretch of dark level plain. For a moment I find myself dreamily wondering if it can possibly be land—if it can be the long-lost Atlantic emerging once more from the ocean floor. Down, down, we go between the gigantic precipitous walls towards the dim plain at the base of the converging sides of the valley and see the ocean beneath us. As we plane down, the water seems to come towards us. It seems to be inviting us with its seductive, treacherous smile and plaintive murmur to enter its depths. But we resist its blandishments, and, getting on a level keel again, we run full tilt against one of the ghostly walls of the valley, pierce it and lose ourselves in its depths.

We see other fantastic phenomena, generated no doubt by our imaginations, which are in a morbidly excited condition as the result of the terrible shock we have undergone at the anchorage. We see an island which has an extraordinary resemblance to Stromboli; a smooth steep cone with smoke curling up from its summit. A little bit further on there is the distinct outline of a colossal fungus, the circumference of whose umbrella, 3000 feet up, expands wider and wider, and threatens to overshadow the whole sky. The fungus disintegrates, and in its place we see little children dancing and frolicking in the sky.

And now once more we have a vast expanse of clear sky before us, but the gigantic clouds have barely vanished to our rear when the north-west wind freshens and the sea looks menacing. A heavy haze appears along the horizon.

At 12.15 p.m. we plane down to 300 feet to fly over a cargo steamer. The waves are too high to afford our machines a safe anchorage in case of a forced descent. Still, that does not worry us, as our engines are doing splendidly. It is true that their temperature, normally 70 degrees, has mounted to 80. Still, they could stand more than that without any disastrous results. Our radiators are marvellous; we still have the water we took in at Orbetello.

The weather is getting much warmer. We are wearing nothing to-day but our black shirts and bathing shorts.

I am beginning to be anxious about our angle of drift. We have had no whalers to help us for the past 940 miles we have travelled to-day; one whaler is away in the north, and the other is blockaded at Ponta Delgada.

We call Lisbon, but get no reply. Fifty minutes pass. At 1.51 p.m. we see a steamer. "I wonder if we ought to hail her and ask her to give us some juice," says Cagna. "How much have we left?" I ask. "About 120 lbs," he replies. "That will keep us going for the hour and half still before us," I decide. "It is hardly dignified to depend upon strange vessels." I give orders to keep calling up Lisbon again and again until there is a reply. It is no use. Ten minutes pass.

Then all of a sudden I see the faint outline of the Portuguese coast. As I am pointing it out to Cagna, Lisbon answers. We are facing the mouth of the Tagus. A little later the towers and houses of the Portuguese capital begin to stand out more clearly. I immediately send this message to the Duce to tell him that the last lap of our ocean flight is ended.

"It is 12.15 p.m. Lisbon is in sight. We have flown 8000 miles over the ocean in your name and that of Italy. GENERAL BALBO."

We cut overland, and are flying over the city at 2.23 p.m. in a wide circular movement. Lisbon sweeps down gracefully in terraced streets from the hills to the banks of the Tagus amidst a wealth of luxuriant vegetation. The radiant beauty of Lisbon reminds me of our dear old Genoa in certain aspects. The people are massed in two great crowds. One is on the hills of Almeid and Acisilkas, on the one side of the river, while the other is assembled in the ancient open space, Tereo de Paco, now called Piazza del Commercio. It is the marine parade of Lisbon, commanding a view of the Bay of Alfeite, our anchorage. Six Portuguese seaplanes come to meet our squadron and escort us up the mouth of the river.

We anchor along the lines of the buoys. In a few minutes General Valle, my chief of staff, who has come from Valentia to meet us, gives us a hearty welcome. Accompanied by him, I am present while my eleven machines alight, followed soon after by Pellegrini's nine. Guns thunder forth a welcome to us, and a platoon of Junker planes goes through graceful evolutions in the sky.

The dazzlingly beautiful city of Lisbon, which I know so well, lies before my eyes. I passed through it last New Year's Day, when Admiral Cago Contigno, the great ocean flyer, was among those who met me.

A number of prominent Italians and Portuguese come alongside my flying-boat in a swift motor-launch, belonging to the warship, *Giasone*. All the machines are now at anchor, and after having arranged about immediate

refuelling, in view of the fact that we are to start again to-morrow, I take my seat in the launch in which the Italian ambassador at Lisbon, Signor Tozzi, the naval and military attachés and the commandant of the *Giasone* are waiting for me. On arriving at the wharf I meet Major Alberto de Oliviera, the Portuguese Minister of War, Señor Mesquita Guinares, the Naval Minister, and other representative citizens.

The Italian Fascists cheer lustily, and the guard of honour greets us with a fanfare of bugles. Units of the fifth regiment of the Chasseurs stand to attention. As I review them, the strains of Italian and Portuguese national anthems ring out, while the bells of Lisbon's hundred churches peal merrily.

As I am watching the troops file past, the Naval Minister approaches me, and handing me a radiogram, says that he is very sorry to be the bearer of bad tidings. The words dance before my eyes:—"Squaglia is dead."

A mist rises before my eyes, and blurs my vision. It is a moment of bitter sorrow for me. My God, what caused his death? He had received no injuries. Apparently it was merely a case of shock. Another of my boys dead! Was it not bad enough to lose Quintavalle? And poor Squaglia was such a courageous and splendid young fellow!

I bid a hasty farewell to my hosts, and take refuge in my hotel. I unburden my grief to Longo and later to Pellegrini, who does not even get an opportunity to tell me about his flight from Horta. I cancel all the fixtures which the Portuguese had planned in our honour for to-day and to-morrow, and, after consulting with Rome, decide to resume our journey at noon. Later on General Piceio telephones from Marseilles, giving me details of the great reception that was being arranged for us. But it is impossible for us to call at Berre. It was the stopping place on which we had decided when we thought we would pass through Ireland on our return journey. But now it does not lie on our route. Furthermore, the tragic death of young Squaglia has utterly overwhelmed me.

At 8 p.m. all the machines are refuelled and ready for the last lap of our flight. I spend the rest of the day in writing telegrams and reports. I snatch a hurried meal, after which I go out with Signor Guariglia, the ambassador who has just arrived from Madrid, and stroll through the most deserted streets of Lisbon, taking great care to keep right out of the public eye. Later on, when I return to the hotel, I find a telegram waiting for me from my wife and children wishing me "Good-night." This message from home is like balm to my afflicted heart.

A little later I get the following telegram from the Duce, which is very consoling to me after my bitter experience of to-day :—

"Congratulations for your magnificent flight from Newfoundland to Lisbon. This morning's accident was not serious, and shows that risks that could not have been foreseen, awaited you in the Azores.

MUSSOLINI."

Next morning I pin the Atlantic Eagles on the tunics of the pilots, and give the expert mechanics Atlantic badges. The little ceremony takes place in a small courtyard attached to the hotel. The crews of the squadron line up before me, and I address them briefly thus :—

"We are about to undertake the last stages of our flight in honour of our country, our King and the Duce. We are going to Rome. It is superfluous to tell an Italian what Rome symbolises for him. Our expedition has brought glory to the flag of Italy. Our achievement may be eclipsed by other aviators, but it can be much more easily surpassed by ourselves. God save Italy! God save the King! God save the Duce!"

The crews re-echo my last words in a loud voice. Then I pin the "Atlantic aviator's badge" on the tunic of each member of the squadron who has flown the ocean only once. I conclude the little ceremony by shaking hands with them

In the afternoon I call on General Carmona, the President of the Republic, who is an old friend of mine. He pays a very enthusiastic tribute to our Atlantic flight, and asks me to convey his congratulations to the King and to the Duce on the glory which our Air Armada has brought to Italy.

CHAPTER XXI

HOME AT LAST

AUGUST 12th. Dawn. We must start flying before sunrise in order to reach Rome later in the afternoon. In the course of our journey we shall lose an hour's daylight, and we have to cover 1437 miles—one of the longest stages of our flight. The weather forecasts predict adverse winds at Gibraltar, for which reason alone, if there were no other, we must be on the move quickly.

At 5 a.m. Greenwich time I am on the wharf, and I go aboard the *Giasone* to say good-bye to the Italian sailors who present me with three little models of old-time Portuguese ships. They are very welcome mementoes of the old navigators who opened up the ocean paths along which we were later to follow. I accept the invitation of my hosts to join them in a drink, but as it is so early, I only take water. We clink glasses to the toast "God save Italy!" Then I hurry off towards my flying-boat.

At 6 a.m. the sky is still dark. We find that we have to wait for sunrise, as it is not an easy matter to take off. We shall be obliged to ascend with our prows facing the city in order to have a head wind.

At 7.10 a.m. we are in the air, and make a few wide circular sweeps over Lisbon, and at 7.25 we are under way. The various platoons are following me in perfect formation. A few minutes later I send a radio message to all machines that I am substituting Rome for Greenwich mean time from now onwards.

We are buffeted about by a strong head wind all the way to Gibraltar. We have a clear sky as far as Cape St. Vincent, but subsequently we enter a zone of

broken patches of scudding clouds and isolated clumps of white fog, through which we fly blindly without undue anxiety. We must soon say farewell to the Atlantic fog—our most loyal comrade since the early stages of our flight. It is obvious that it regrets parting company with us.

Our altitude is 300 feet. It is very hot. The sea below is very rough. We are flying over an interminable procession of steamers—one every five minutes on an average. What a change from the desolate stretches of the ocean! How those ships beneath us pitch and roll amid the choppy waves!

We are making poor headway. It is 10.20 a.m. as we fly over Punta Europa. We have been doing an average of 100 m.p.h. when we should have done 140. I am getting rather anxious. At this rate of going, we run the risk of not reaching Rome before nightfall.

It is getting hotter. I give orders to climb to 3000 feet.

The lofty, steep, craggy portals of Gibraltar are now below us. After passing those rocky ramparts from which the muzzles of British cannon emerge, we start to climb higher. The sea is now calm, but the horizon is hidden by a haze. While the main part of the squadron is passing through the straits, I send a radio message to my comrades drawing their attention to the fact that we have now said farewell to the ocean. It has been flown three times by Italian aviators, I add, and now that the pioneer work is done, and the riddle of the Sphinx is solved, other comrades—perhaps even ourselves—will be able to cross the Atlantic in the near future with a greater sense of safety.

At 11.35 a.m. we are crossing Satintel Point. The temperature has risen to 30 degrees Centigrade, and we can only ascend slowly, because the water is continuing to rise on the thermometer scale. At 11.49 we are 6300 feet above the crags of the bare and sterile Capo de Gata which looks like a region under the spell of a curse.

Although the temperature eventually drops to 23 degrees, my men in the various machines are complaining, as they are afraid of an explosion.

But Pezzani sends this reassuring message :—

“ Don’t worry. There is nothing to fear.”

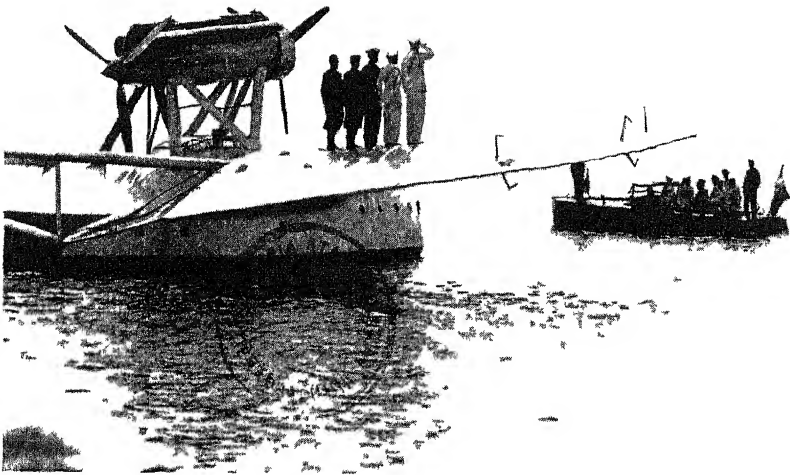
At noon Pellegrini asks me to allow him to alight at Los Alcazares owing to the water of his engine being overheated. I give him permission, if he finds it impossible to carry on, but I urge him to stick it out, pointing out to him that I myself am in exactly the same position. To encourage him I remind him that Rome is waiting for us. The general tacks off towards Carthagená, but as he is about to plane down, he changes his mind, and forges ahead. I knew he would! Pellegrini is the bravest and the most reliable airman that I have ever met.

When we were battling with the Atlantic how we longed for the Mediterranean! And now that we are flying over it our troubles are not ended. I receive messages again and again from my boys in this vein :

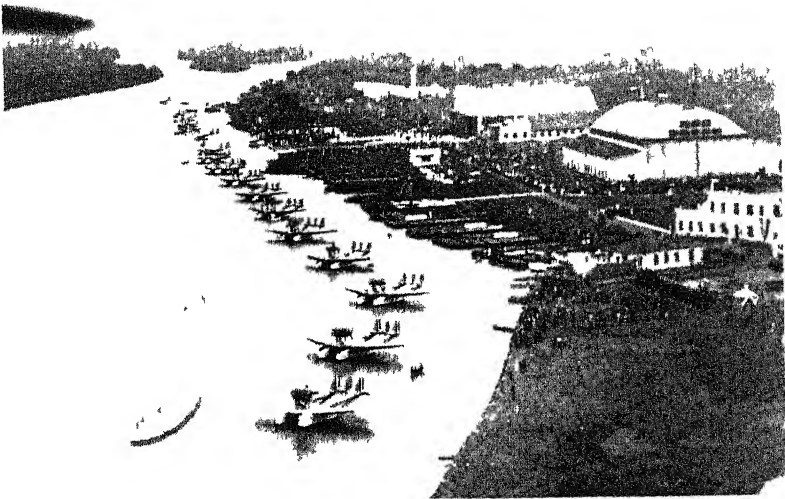
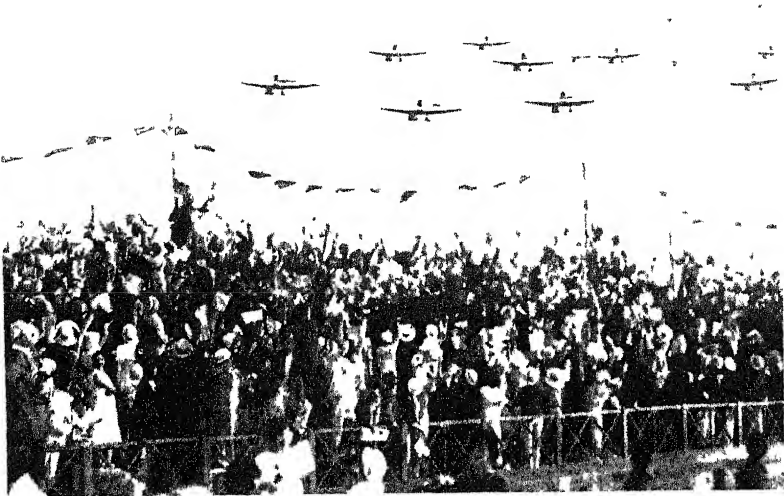
“ It’s no use, your Excellency. We shall not be able to keep behind you.”

I know only too well the fight that is going on in the hearts of those gallant fellows. They are yearning to enter Rome together triumphantly this evening, but they have to reduce the speed of their engines in order to cool the water, and in doing so they lose way. But I refuse to give in. I know that at 6 p.m. the Duce will be at the Lido of Rome, and I want to be punctual. Consequently I refuse to look any more at the pressure-gauges for the temperature of the oil and water. Pezzani agrees with me, and Capannini, an absolute expert on the matter, assures me that our engines will stand the strain. As all the engines are exactly of the same pattern, those on the other machines will hold out if mine does.

We fly over places that are familiar to us since the stages of our previous flights. Not quite three years ago we left Carthagená on a trial flight with the twelve



THOUSANDS OF HANDS ARE STRETCHED OUT IN GREETING TOWARDS THE
VICTORIOUS AVIATORS AS THEY FLY OVER THE LIDO OF ROMÉ
THE KING RE VIEWS THE CARRIAGES AND INSPECTS THE LIVING BOATS



THE ARRIVAL AT THE LIDO OF ROMI ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 12TH
THE ATLANTIC FLYING-BOATS ANCHORED AT THE LIDO OF ROMI ON THE
EVENING OF THE RETURN

machines of the first Atlantic squadron, and when we were within 50 miles of Cape Palos, on the Algiers route, Valle had a breakdown, and for long hours I thought he was lost. As the incident recurs to my memory, I relive all the anguish of that dreadful day, as well as the joy I felt when I heard that he had succeeded in alighting safely, and was picked up by a Greek steamer which took him in tow. I recollect that on that night I had on board Lieutenant Collar, a Spanish officer, who with Barbaran did a magnificent flight this year from Seville to Cuba on a land plane. Poor chap! After his victory, both he and his companion lost their lives in Mexico.

We are now in the neighbourhood of the Balearic Islands. The optical illusion caused by our rapid flight, makes us fancy that the peaks of those beautiful islands, jewels in the caskets of the sea, are advancing to meet us. At 1.17 a.m. I see Iviza, and at 2.45 Calrera appears on the sky-line. How bright Calrera is to-day, and how overcast it was on November 17th, 1930, during the course of the first stage of our first Atlantic flight! And beyond is Pubito de Campos, where we fled to shelter from a cyclone accompanied by such a tempestuous sea as I had never seen before in my life, and probably shall never see again. I recall to my companions with nods and gestures those familiar spots, and point out the more outstanding ones with my forefinger.

Our flight is now beginning to be a bit monotonous. We are in the open sea and shall not catch a glimpse of land again for nearly two hours. With the haze around us it is impossible to steer along by watching the horizon. Cagna has just reminded me, by the way, that I am giving the machine rather too much of a list. I must look at the instruments. Yes, Cagna is right.

One thought keeps me going, despite the fact that I am utterly exhausted. In a few hours I shall see Rome! What a charm there is in the very sound of the word! I shall have finished my task! I shall see once more my country, the Duce and my little ones!

Forward we go through an atmosphere like an oven. The engines drone on eternally, and their pulsations seem to be reverberating through my brain.

At last, at 4 p.m., I see Sardinia on the horizon. I send a radio message to my squadron :—

“ Comrades, that land silhouetted against the skyline is our native land to which we said farewell as we crossed the Alps forty-two days ago.”

The outlines of Sardinia are now clearer. I can see Asinara. The island of tragic history is fringed with a dazzling white embroidery of sea-foam. As the platoons of my squadron are considerably behind me, I make a slight digression from my route, and fly over Sassari, the city of the heroic brigade. My heart beats faster as I gaze on my country. What a rich compensation is the joy I feel at this moment for all the fatigues of our flight !

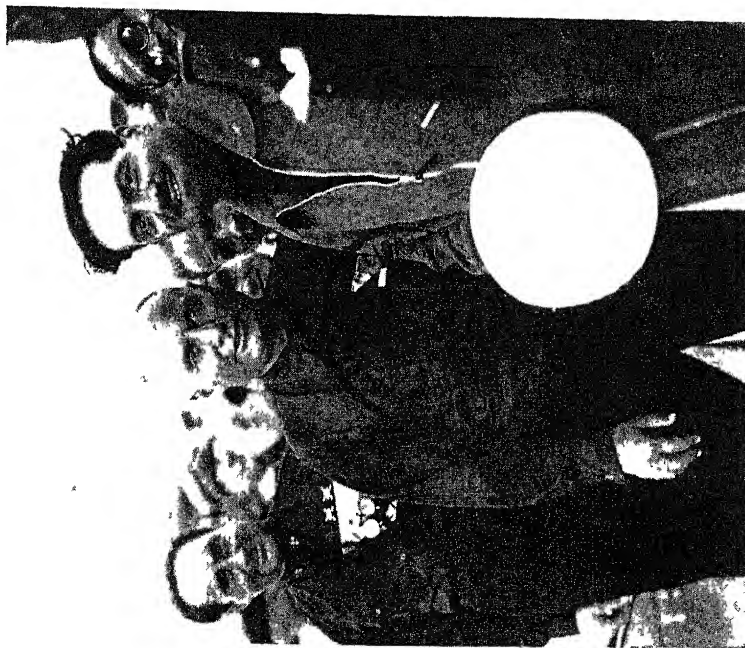
I continue along the wild coast and at 5.1 p.m. I pass between Maddalena and Capera, and with the aid of my field-glasses I see Garibaldi's tomb.

At last my eyes rest once more on the expanse of the Tyrrhenian Sea—my home waters ! We start to plane down gradually. The temperature of the air is keeping all the time above twenty degrees centigrade. I descend to within 150 feet of the water. I send a radio message to all machines :—“ I have slackened to 1400 revolutions. Plane down.”

At 5.50 p.m. we see the coast of Italy, a very faint, pallid, cloudy outline on the verge of the horizon. I must wait now for the rest of my squadron to get into line behind me. I start to fly over the sea in broad circular sweeps. What a long nerve-wracking delay ! It seems to me like an eternity, now that we are within sight of our goal. My radio is busy gingering up the rest of the boys.

Here comes the second platoon, followed by the third, the fourth and all the others. At 6.20 p.m. my flying-boat has rallied round it in the sky, whose deep azure tints are already fading, all the other machines. Now forward for Rome ! Vercelloni has almost run out of oil, but I do not allow him to alight. He will be the first to anchor on the Tiber.

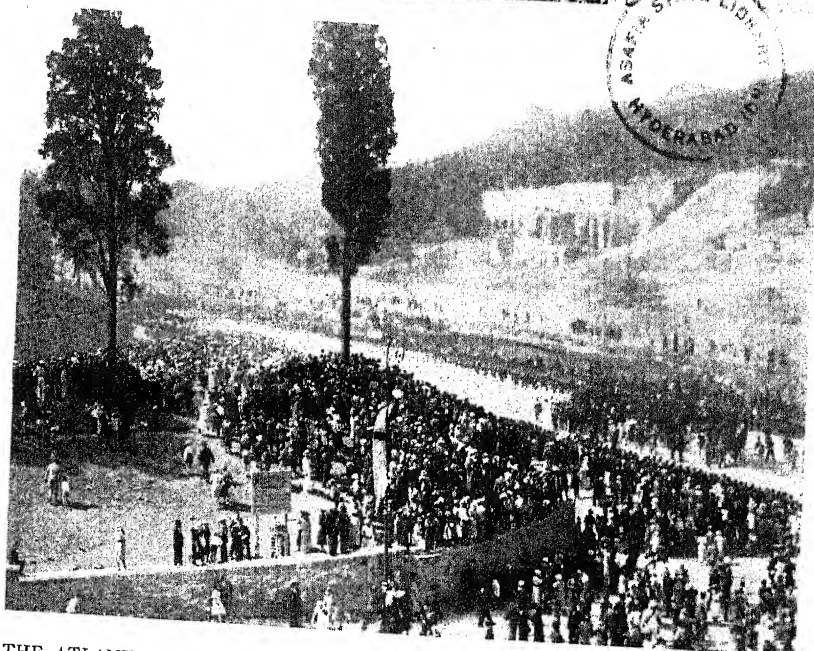
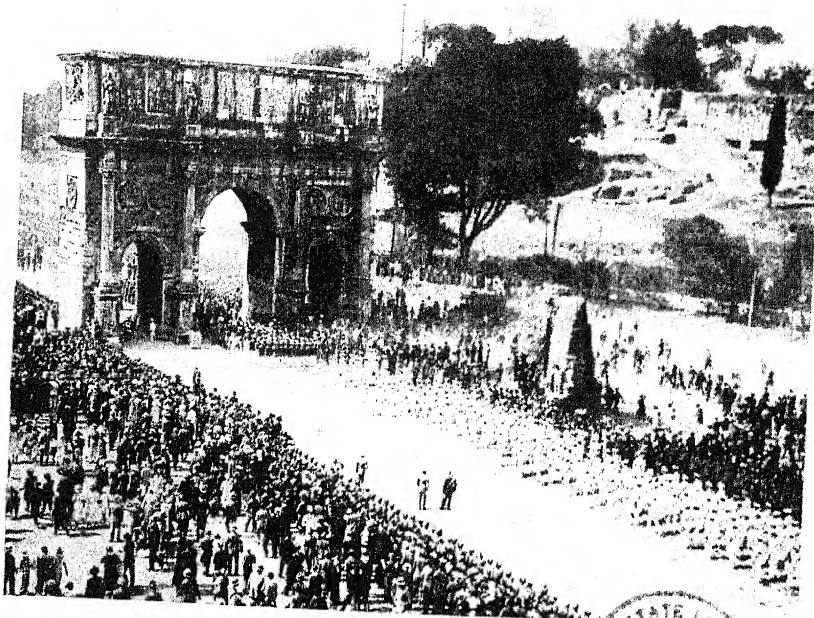
Now all the triangular silver platoons are to my rear,



THE DUCE WITH BALBO IMMEDIATELY AFTER HE
HAD LANDED AT THE LIDO OF ROVI



AIR MARSHAL BALBO WITHS MUSSOLINI IMMEDIATELY
ON LANDING AFTER HIS RETURN FROM LIGHT



THE ATLANTIC FLIERS' TRIUMPHAL MARCH THROUGH THE RUINS OF "THE
GRANDEUR THAT WAS ROME"
THE ATLANTIC FLIERS GO TO THE PALATINE

with equal distances between them individually. The last ones are scarcely visible against the wan sky, and are so far away that they seem light, stationary, cloud streaks upon the firmament. The sun is already sinking towards the horizon, and the great concave arch spanning the sea and land is suffused with gold. To the left of the estuary of the Tiber is a hook-like spur of land with ramparts of golden sand which seem to forbid entrance to the river ; the other spur of land to the right has been eroded by the rushing current which spreads seawards like a huge yellowish fan. Further inland at the other end of the oblique parallelogram formed by the estuary of the Tiber is a promontory stretching seawards like an open hand, on which stands the slender column of the lighthouse.

On the left bank between irregular undulations of reddish earth, here and there varied by patches of acrid sea-grass, with long straight roads cutting across the barren vista towards the invisible city, and a wide expanse of country aglow with the slanting rays of the sun, are the huge mass of the central aerodrome, the terraces of small houses, the sheds, the gardens and the grassy squares of the Lido. We fly at an altitude of 120 feet and at a speed of 170 miles an hour along the course of the river.

Then suddenly we see away beyond the narrow estuary enormous crowds of people, looking like thousands of black patches stretching along both banks and seated in rows on the stands, while a regular tide of congested humanity overflows along the green meadows of Fumicino and along the opposite bank, converging towards a little platform erected in front of the building of the Mediterranean Aerial Society, on which I fancy I see the Duce's noble profile. And to the rear of these two converging tides of humanity are thousands and thousands of motor-cars, lined up in enormous improvised parks.

My eyes wander over this land for which I had pined with such longing, and pick out the familiar spots, houses, streets, clumps of trees, the long curves of the Sacred Isle, the wide expanse of the Campagna suffused

with the golden glow of the setting-sun. It is the hour of nostalgia which is the theme of so many poets, the hour when a feeling of loneliness broods over the sailor, the hour that recalls gold-tinted landscapes that were the background of our dreams. After all our wanderings over strange lands and seas, we are gazing on holy Italy, the most beautiful country in the whole world.

And now our wings hover over the multitude, and pursue their course along the opal-tinted ribbon of the Tiber, followed closely by the other white wings of the squadron. We pass by the wireless station, wheel round above the brightly tinted expanse of land and river, and get another glimpse of the azure sea, which, as a result of the sharp tacking of our machine, gives us the optical illusion that it has suddenly towered in a menacing mass in the sky.

We cannot hear any other sound owing to the roar of the 46 engines which reverberate against the sunset sky, but for all that we can imagine that we hear the cheering of the multitude. We see thousands of faces turned skywards at one moment, and simultaneously looking towards the horizon a moment later ; we see the hands waving, and the intermittent swaying of the crowd. And everywhere we see flags galore.

Now we are planing down again lower and lower with our prows facing the estuary of the river. We fly over the green slopes of the Sacred Isle ; we skim above the surface of the yellow water while our engines now only hum intermittently just to show us that they are still working. Then there is a very faint impact as we touch the stream, followed by a sensation of gliding, as the hulls feather the water, leaving lanes of foam in their wake. The engines which have been momentarily silent, resume their throbbing as we swerve towards the mooring-buoys, close to the bank, which is black with people. We shut off our engines, and listen spellbound to the cheers of the people massed on the banks, and the blare of bands.

A motor-launch is coming towards us. But we do not need its assistance, because my machine, gliding

swiftly over the water, is already alongside the slipway, and is moored almost instantaneously. Slipping on my tunic and cap, I step from the pilot's cabin on to the left wing. I see the Duce in his black shirt, his face aglow. I give him the Roman salute. Then I leap ashore.

CHAPTER XXII

A ROMAN TRIUMPH

THE first person to greet me as I stepped ashore was the Duce. Neither of us spoke for quite a long while, but the look in his eyes and the warmth of his handclasp were eloquent of tense emotion. Then in a tone of camaraderie he congratulated me and my men on the successful conclusion of our task in a few simple and sincere words, which rang in my ears like anthems of victory. He added that he had arranged the details of a triumph for us such as greeted the return of the Roman legions in ancient days. The route of the procession would be under the arch of Constantine and along the Imperial Way. Afterwards we were to go to the Palatine. "It is a tribute that your country owes you, Balbo," he concluded with a kindly smile.

He then started in a bantering tone to joke about my bronzed and healthy appearance. He made similar comments about my comrades who came ashore, as platoon after platoon alighted, and moored their machines without a hitch. As the crews of the successive platoons reached the wharf they rushed to greet their relatives who were assembled on the grand stand close by, after which they fell into line for the ceremonial review by the Duce.

Meanwhile the crowds successively cheered the crews of the various flying-boats, calling out their names individually as they landed. They sang "Giovinezza," "The Royal March," and hoary war-time favourites. And thus in the waning dusk, the giant flying-boats, after their long wanderings over the skies of two conti-

nents and the Atlantic, were at last rocked gently to rest on the rippling waters of the yellow Tiber. The last platoon to alight was Longo's.

When the whole squadron was drawn up on the wharf, I called out in a loud tone :

“ Attention ! ”

There was a sharp click of heels as they stood at the salute.

“ God save the Duce ! ” I shouted.

“ God save the Duce ! ” they repeated with one voice, fixing their eyes proudly on their chief.

Their words had hardly died away when the crowd redoubled their thunderous applause and clapped their hands in a frenzy of enthusiasm, while the last rays of the sun were reflected in the waters, and the shadows of our first night in Italy began to descend.

The motor-cars drew up in front of us, one for the crew of each flying-boat. I asked the Duce to take the first in the line but he refused, and with a gesture that brooked no gainsay, ordered the crews of the Atlantic squadron to start for Rome. Accordingly I took my seat in the first car which opened the procession, and slowly moved along between two lines of wildly cheering people.

Meanwhile the Duce leaped on to the little terrace, kissed my wife's hand, and took my little fair-haired baby boy, Paolo, in his arms—a charming gesture which was a testimony to his kindness of heart.

The cars moved off from the anchorage, took the road linking up with the Marine Avenue, and proceeded towards Rome, while the tide of humanity, held back with difficulty by the troops that lined the road, still surged on both sides of us. The crowds were most dense near the entrance of the motor-track. Many of them only caught a fugitive glimpse of the motor-cars and of our white uniforms, but that did not prevent them from cheering us as wholeheartedly as those who had a better view.

Running parallel with the motor-track was another road, along which poured a tide of private cars which kept pace with us as we proceeded along towards the city.

amidst the ceaseless cheering of the multitude. The double line of cars, on which the revolving lanterns of the lighthouses stabbing the night sky with long intermittent beams of light, shot fitful gleams, formed a very impressive sight as they sped along between the endless rows of applauding people.

Along the track of the road running parallel to ours many cars overtook mine; the occupants shouted my name and cheered wildly, and then sped away towards Rome. Among those cars was one carrying the Crown Prince and Princess Maria José. I saw his Royal Highness looking with a smile towards me, and caught a glimpse of the fair-headed princess. Then came a greeting from both:—"Bravo, Balbo!" I had barely time to acknowledge the royal salute. My hand had just touched the peak of my cap, when the car dashed on. Later on I received a telegram from the Prince and Princess stating that they were present incognito at the reception at the Lido, and that they were thrilled to join in the acclamations which greeted the wings of Italy.

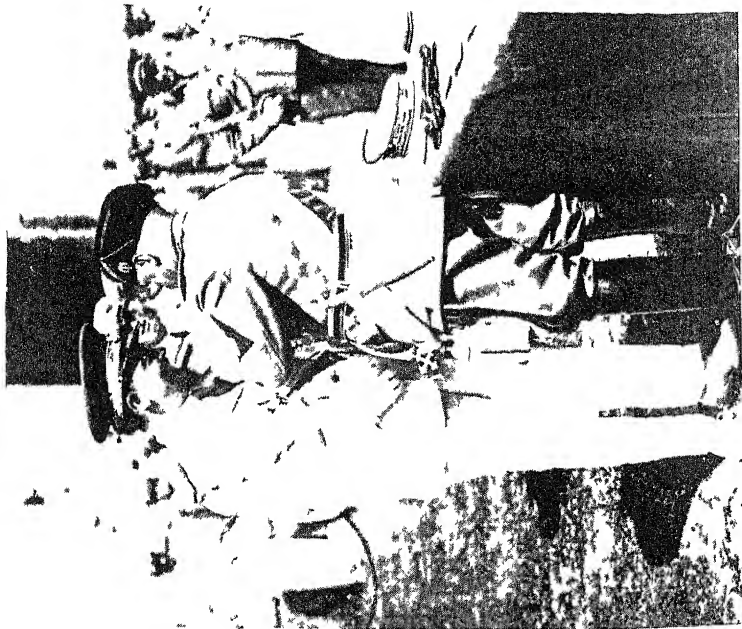
Members of the government, leaders of the Fascist Party and leading military and naval officers also brought their cars level with mine along the Via del Mare, and shouted "Bravo, Balbo!" as they caught my eye.

At the point where the Via del Mare debouches into the densely populated areas of San Paolo and Testuccio, the streets were literally packed with people, while the scene was gay with flags and bunting. Flowers and confetti were showered on us from all sides by our enthusiastic fellow-country-people, most of them working-men in their shirt sleeves, toil-worn women, girls and children with piping voices. Young Fascists on motor-bicycles and mounted police found it very difficult to keep the road clear for us. And then the bands massed at the corners of the streets, and the congregational singing of the Balilla and of the young Italian girls, combined with the acclamations of the enormous crowds in giving us a triumphal entry into the heart of mother Rome which will never fade from my memory.

So dense was the crowd through which our cars had to pass that it took us about an hour to reach the Piazza

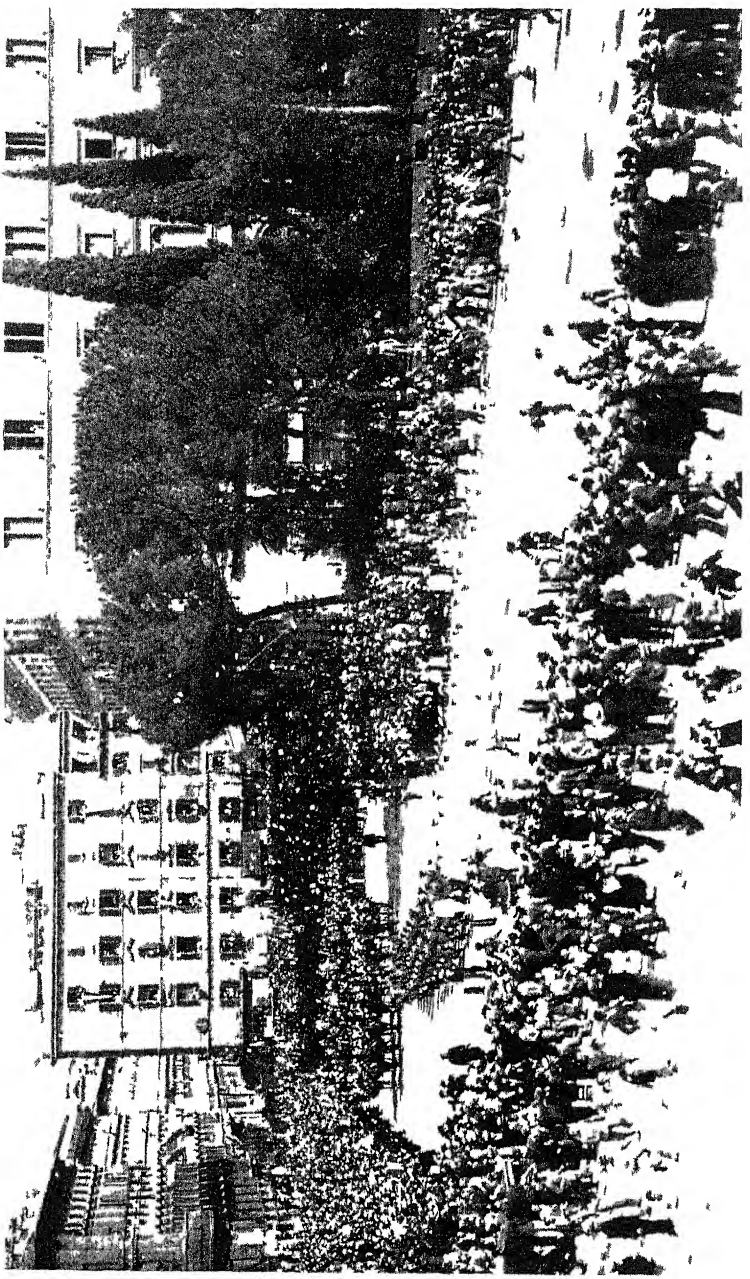


V- VI



THE DUCE CIVILS BALLO THE IIII OF AH VAKSHAI
AND IINS TO HIS FUSIC THE MEDAL OF THE
ATLANJIC TACTI

THE STATION AT THE VINCENNA RAILROAD STATION, INDIANA, 1904



Venezia, from which we went through the Corso Umberto to the Piazza Colonna. On the balcony of the Palazzo della Stampa were draped the magnificent tapestries of the capital, with the letters S.P.Q.R. embossed in gold. On the frontal of the building was an enormous portrait of Mussolini.

It was as light as day in the square. Four flood-lighting reflectors arranged on the Palazzo della Galeria focussed their dazzling beams on the opposite building, bringing into bold relief especially the map of the route of the Italian squadron, with white electric bulbs showing the course of the outward journey, and red ones to mark the return trip.

At the entrance of the Circolo della Stampa I was received by the secretary of the Fascist Party, who greeted me warmly, and after a brief chat, in compliance with his request, I appeared on the balcony, surrounded by my boys, while in the rear floated the standard of the squadron. A hush fell on the immense multitude that filled the square, as I made a signal that I wished to address them.

"In the name of the Atlantic crews," I said, "I thank you, comrades, for the magnificent reception which you have given us. Above all things, however, I am anxious that you should not lose sight of the great fact that my comrades and myself are just the humble soldiers of a great chief in whose name it is an easy and a pleasing task to fight victorious battles."

The thunder of applause that greeted my words had not died away for a considerable time after I had retired. After chatting for a little while with a number of friends, I slipped out as quickly as possible in order to get home. But it took me a long time to do so, as the crowd accompanied me all the way. When at length I arrived home, I found standing in the doorway, their faces radiant with expectancy, my wife, my children, my sisters, my brother and my relatives.

The Roman triumph had a wonderful sequel on August 13th. When I left my home at 8.50 a.m. with my flight adjutant, the streets were already thronged with people. Considerable numbers had some hours previously strateg-

ically occupied the best points of vantage along the route by which the procession was to go. I drove quickly towards the Quirinal, where we were to be received by the King. The members of the squadron in their white uniforms with scarves and decorations, were lined up, awaiting my arrival. We were conducted to a large hall in the palace where I called my men to attention. I had barely done so when the King entered, alert and smiling.

"God save the King!" I called out in a loud voice.

"God save the King!" echoed the crews of the Atlantic squadron, coming smartly to the salute.

I presented my men one by one to the King, who chatted animatedly for a few moments with each of them.

During the course of the royal reception we could hear the ceaseless thunder of acclamation from the masses in the square, whose numbers were momentarily swelling with the crowds coming up from the Via Venti Settembre, the Via XXIV Maggio and the Via Dataria.

Before saying good-bye to us, the King told me that he had great pleasure in signing recently a decree issued by the Duce for my promotion to the rank of Air-Marshal.

When we appeared on the square again, headed by the Air Force band and the colours of the squadron, a company of carabinieri flanking our column kept the centre of the road open for us. "Long live the King!" cried the multitude, as the grand balcony of the palace opened, and the King appeared, accompanied by the Duke of Aosta in the uniform of a colonel of the Air Force. My eyes fixed on the balcony, I gave the salute, and my men stood to attention while our flag dipped for a moment. Then we started our march towards the Via XXIV Maggio, while the King watched us filing past.

The crowds seemed to grow closer and denser as we traversed the Via Nazionale towards the Piazza Venezia. Along the route were lined up the Fascist, municipal and combatant organisations of the city. Flags were dipped

in greeting to our little azure standard. The wide expanse of Magnanapoli and the Via IV Novembre were black with people. At Piazza Venezia in addition to the Roman Fascists was a contingent from my own city, whose enthusiasm almost reached the limit of frenzy.

We debouched upon the Imperial Way, the wonderful avenue of Rome, which under the inspiration of the Duce, has given a modern continuity to the glorious landmarks and venerable ruins of the ancient city of the Cæsars. On roof tops, from windows, and spanning the great thoroughfare, flags of all sizes and colours waved under a blue sky. For the first time too, after the lapse of so many centuries, Rome unfurled the great flag that marked her proud position as one of the world's greatest maritime cities.

In accordance with the usage of ancient Rome, green laurel leaves were strewn as a triumphal carpet along the path which we traversed, to the strains of innumerable bands whose blare was not loud enough to drown the acclamations of the multitude. Presently we approached the stately statues of the Cæsars between the two forums and the imposing bulk of the Basilica of Maxentius, while in the background the Colosseum, with its countless superimposed arches, stood out against the blue sky.

Close to the temple of Venus Genetrix stood a large number of women dressed in black—the mothers and widows of those who fell in the Great War, in the Fascist campaigns and in the cause of Italian aviation. When we came level with them, the women advanced towards us, and strewed flowers in our path.

The open space in front of the Colosseum and the slope of the Orto Botanico and of the Palatine as far as the Forum Romanum, were crowded to the utmost capacity.

Near the Arch of Constantine generals and other superior officers of all the armed forces of the Crown in full dress uniform were lined up. Among them I noticed the stately form of the Duke of Aosta. A guard of honour from the Roman garrison was drawn up outside the Arch of Constantine.

This was the culmination of the Roman triumph which the Duce decreed as a tribute to us. For the first time after a lapse of 2000 years a victorious army had marched along the Triumphal Way. It was no longer a landmark belonging to the dead pathetic past, with an appeal to archæologists and poets only—it was one of the life arteries of eternal Rome. I had a feeling as I walked along it at the head of my squadron that a great ritual, symbolising the continuity of the life of ancient Rome, was being enacted.

The troops presented arms. Big guns thundered. The bell of the Capitol pealed in the distance. Then the multitude burst forth with a thunderous volume of applause that reverberated among the seven hills of Rome. The squadron's standard, carried by Second-Lieutenant Antonio Chioddi, the youngest among us, led the procession under the Arch of Constantine ; I followed, and after me came all the rest of my comrades.

Having passed under the arch, we continued our route along the Triumphal Way to the Palatine, where the Duce held the great rally.

On the slope of the hill, in the solemn setting of the stadium of Domitian, the ceremonial was held. The standard, carried by pupils of the Caserta Academy, who acted as its guard of honour, formed a background for the crews of the Atlantic squadron.

Three bugle blasts announced the approach of the Duce who, attended by me, and wearing the uniform of a commander-in-chief of Italian militia, advanced towards the members of the squadron, who stood to attention. I introduced them to the Duce in the following words :

" Duce, I have the honour of presenting to you the second aerial Atlantic squadron. I hope that in return for what you have done for us, you will one day do us the honour of asking us to fight for you."

Then turning towards my men, I called out : " God save the Duce ! "

" God save the Duce ! " replied the squadron as with one voice.

And now in an atmosphere of tense emotion, Mussolini addressed us thus :

" Officers and men of the Atlantic squadron,

" Four months ago, speaking on this hill which is hallowed in the annals of imperial Rome, I referred to the imminent test of your grit and courage and assured you of my confidence that you would win through. When your brave commander came to say farewell to me, I told him that I was confident that he would return. My joy on this day of glory for Italy is tempered by sorrow for our two brave countrymen who were killed at Amsterdam and the Azores. The memory of these gallant comrades will be treasured religiously for ever in our hearts. Their death is the tribute that has to be paid to blind fate in every great undertaking. I have followed your great enterprise with anxiety and yet with confidence, and to-day after your triumph, which has been patterned on those of ancient Rome, I assert that you have fully deserved that great tribute for your services to Italy, to the Revolution and to aviation.

" You have deserved it for your services to Italy. During the course of your 12,000 miles flight, which will assume epic proportions with the passing of the years, hundreds of people have uttered the name of Italy in all the languages of the world. When you reached America you fanned anew to a great flame the fire of the patriotism of the colonies in that continent by your presence and by your heroic achievements. You have deserved your triumph for your services to the Revolution, because you wore your black shirts during your expedition, an expedition which was to consecrate in the skies of two continents the solidarity of the Fascist Revolution. You have deserved this for your services to aviation, and I think that many years will pass before other nations can match—I am not talking about their surpassing—your great exploit.

" I congratulate you most heartily, and I assure you as head of the Government, as a Fascist, and as an Italian, of my thorough satisfaction regarding your great achievement. And the tribute which I have just paid to your commander who has led you by his shrewdness, his enthusiasm and his courage, to victory, I extend to every one of you.

"His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to sign the decrees regarding promotions. And on this very day I intend to give you the insignia and the badges of your new ranks."

The Duce then stepped towards me, and presented me with an Air-Marshall's cap. Then all my comrades, one by one, filed before him, and received from him the awards of their valour. Three bugle blasts announced the conclusion of the memorable ceremony.

During the afternoon of that great day, Signor Starace, accompanied by the Council and all the leading men of the Fascist Party, presented us at the Palazzo Littorio with gold medals. The Governor of Rome also presented us with gold medals in the Julius Cæsar hall of the Senatorial Palace.

In the evening the city was illuminated.

On the following day, August 14th, the various crews took their planes at different hours to their anchorage at Orbetello.

Accompanied by the Duke of Aosta, I went to meet the King at the station of the little town that is now known all over the world as the "Eagle's Nest."

He invited me into his carriage, and in a very short time our train pulled up at the landing-stage.

The crews were all drawn up on the wings of their respective machines, which were aligned in a great arc on the calm surface of the water. The King reviewed them as he passed in front of them on a motor-launch. As he approached each flying-boat in turn, the crews, standing to attention, shouted: "Long live the King!" The King was obviously very much impressed, and told me so when the ceremony was over.

When he returned to the bank, the King inspected the buildings along the slipway, and the school of Higher Navigation where the preparations for the Atlantic flight had been carried out. Meanwhile the crews had come ashore and were lined up on the great square in front of the landing-stage. When the King appeared they came to the salute.

"In the presence of His Majesty the King, and in his

name," I said, " I declare that the second Atlantic squadron is disbanded. God save the King ! "

" God save the King ! " my boys re-echoed.
Our task was ended.



INDEX

A

Abbiata, Captain, 21, 24, 25
 Aerial Navigation, School of, 19
 Air Bases, selection of, 16-21
 Air Force, Italian, 20, 24, 50, 169, 170, 190
Akron, the, 201
 Alaska, 17, 220
 Alberto Thorvaldsen, the Iceland sculptor, 120
 Aleutian Islands, 17, 21
Alice, the, 33-35, 53-55, 57, 146, 148, 150-157, 229-233, 243, 244
 Alps, the, flight over, 70-78, 88
 Ambrosino, the brothers Magdalo and Piero, 46
 America, 23, 29, 68, 88
 Amsterdam, 27, 61, 82-89, 277
 Antoninus Pius, 96
 Aosta, Duke of, 63, 278
 Arcesi, Father, 216
 Argentario, Mount, 73
 Ariosto Year, 47
 Atlantic, 11, 32, 35, 39, 68, 140-153, 204, 236, 238, 245-262
 Atu, island (of the Aleutian group), 21
 Aviation, International Congress, on, 12
 Aviators, Atlantic, Convention of, 25, 26
 Azores, 16, 103, 235, 239, 277

B

Balbo Street, 228
 Baldini, Captain, 62, 86, 87
 Balearic Islands, 33
 "Balilla," the, 147, 272

Barba, Lieutenant-Colonel, 149
 Basilica of Maxentius, Rome, 275
 Battery, the, 210
 Battle Island, 159
 Baumann, Professor, 29, 119, 131, 136, 139, 232, 236, 237
 Belle Isle Strait, 54, 57, 159
Biglieri, the, 148, 239, 242, 243
 Biseo, Captain, 48
 Blackshirts, 57, 183
 Bolama, 16, 24, 32, 33, 231
 Bolshevism, 185
 Brazil, 15, 40
 Broadway, 199, 210
 Bronx, the, 198
 Brooklyn, 200, 203, 215

C

Caboto, Giovanni, 158
 Cabot Strait, 230, 235
 Cagna, Stefano, Major, 27, 28, 46, 62, 72, 114, 115, 139, 142, 144, 237, 244
 Calabria, 12
 California, 17
 Calvert, Sir George, later Lord Baltimore, 205
 Campanelli, Captain, 161, 229
 Canadians, French, 166
 Canova, 120
 Cape Farewell, 146
 Cape Lewis, 159
 Cape Split, 246
 Capri, 144
 Carlsbad, 80
 Carmona, General, President of Portuguese Republic, 261
 Carroll, Bishop, 221

Cartwright, 53-55, 132, 146, 150, 152, 157, 204
 Castruccio, Signor Giuseppe, 187, 195
 Catholic University of Chicago—its tribute to Air-Marshals Balbo, 189
 Chicago, 23, 89, 172, 173, 178-197, 243
 Chief "Black Thorn," 192
 Chief "Evergreen Tree," 192
 "Chief Flying Eagle"—title conferred on Balbo by Sioux Red Indians, 192
 Child, Mr., ex-Ambassador of the United States at Rome, 188, 189
 China, 17, 21
 Chrysler Building, 199
 Civitavecchia, 40
 Clark-Hall, Air-Marshals, 100
 Cleveland, flight over, 197
 Clingheri, Captain, 124
 Coblenz, 80
 Cologne, flight over, 81
 Colosseum, the, 275
 Columba, Saint, his mission to Scotland, 96
 Columbus, Christopher, 31, 191, 214
 Como, Lake, 76
 Connecticut, flight over, 197, 215
 Constantine, Arch of, 270, 276
Conte Grande, 13, 14
 Coolidge, President, 191
 Cot, Monsieur, 60
 Crown Prince of Italy, the, 272
 Cuba, 17

D

Dante, 72
 De Bono, Emilio, 65, 66
 Della Campana, Commandant, 39, 147
 Del Ponte, Major, 167, 168
 Dern, General, United States Secretary of War, 227
 Detroit, 177

de Valera, Eamonn, President of the Executive of the Irish Free State, 106
 Di Maio, Dr., meteorologist, 236
 Disarmament Conference, 108
 Dodecanese Islands, 33
 Dog's dance, 191
 Donizetti, 95
 Donnelly, Lieutenant, 252, 255
 Draghelli, Captain, 131, 232
 Duce, the, 15, 30, 31, 42, 43, 44, 60, 61, 66, 73, 149, 152, 168, 206, 217, 235, 261, 271, 276
 Dunbar, view of from the air, 94
 Durandau, Alfredo, 169
 Dusseldorf, 81

E

East River, New York, 203
 Edinburgh, Air-Marshals Balbo's impressions of, 95-97
 Ellis Island, New York, 200
 Empire State Building, 199
 England, flight over, 92-94
 Englishmen of good stock, Air-Marshals Balbo's estimate of, 108
 Eredia, Professor, 239
 Erie, Lake, 175, 178
 Eric the Great, 122
 Esquimaux, 24, 129

F

Fabius Maximus, 168
 Fascism, 14, 217
 Fatal crashes : (a) at Amsterdam, 85-87 ; (b) at Azores, 254-255, 259
 Ferrara, 47
 Florida, 17
 Flamborough Head, 92
 Floyd Bennett anchorage, 200, 220
 Fog, Air Armada's battles against, 97, 98, 99, 113, 114, 141-146, 148, 149, 246, 247, 263

Fokker, Herr, 87
 Ford factories, 177
 Fort Frontenac, 175
 Fortune Bay, flight over, 231
 Forum Romanum, The, 275
 Foyle, the, alighting of squadron
 on, 99, 100
 Freddi, Signor Luigi, of the
 Popolo d'Italia, 35
 Fybelly Isle, flight over, 158
 Fylla, the, 141

G

Gadames, 63
 Gameth islands, 150
 Garibaldi, 49
 General Balbo Avenue, 191
 Genoa, 74, 230
 Giant's Causeway, 98
 Giasone, the, 258, 262
 Gibraltar, 262, 263
 "Giovinezza," 154, 190, 194, 218,
 270
 Giovo Pass, flight over, 75
 Godthaab, 24
 Goering, Herr, German Air Minis-
 ter, 87
 Goethe, 120
 Grossardi, Signor, 202, 215
 Governor Island, New York, 200
 Graf Zeppelin, the, 88
 Graham, Sir John, 58
 Great Caribou, Air Armada over,
 159
 Grandi, Signor, 107
 Greek Press, protests by, 33
 Greenland, 29, 147
 Gringet Bay, 53
 Guglielmi, Marchioness, 57
 Guglielmi, Marquis, 57
 Gulf Stream, the, 149

H

Hallgrimur Pjetursson, the Ice-
 land poet, 120

Hast, Father, 187
 Hay, Lady Drummond, 88
 Hendon Air Pageant, 28
 Horner, Harry, Governor of State
 of Illinois, 183, 184
 Horta, the Azores, 243, 251, 254,
 259
 Hotel Borg, Reykjavik, 117, 122-
 124
 Hudson, River, 198, 210
 "Hymn to Rome," 124, 154

I

"I-Balb," the, 45, 91, 157, 173
 Icebergs, 27, 53-55, 147, 149, 150,
 159
 Iceland, 23, 27, 29, 89, 112, 115-
 140
 Individual submerged by mass-
 mind in America, 201-202
 Infante, Lieutenant-Colonel, 175,
 202
 Ingolfen, the Scandinavian navi-
 gator, 121, 122
 Ireland, 17, 68, 95, 98-111, 236,
 238, 259
 Irish Free State, Air-Marshal
 Balbo's entrance into, 105, 106
 Irish political situation, Air-Mar-
 shal Balbo's impression of, 106
 Isotta Fraschini engines, 41
Italia, the, 27
 Italia-America Society, 219
 "Italo Balbo's Day," 191
 Italy, 12, 13, 15, 40, 117

J

Japan, 17, 21
 Journalists, Italian, 35, 65 ;
 Canadian, 171, 172 ; Chicago,
 181
 Jules Verne's *A Journey to the
 Centre of the Earth*, 141
 Julianehaab, 24, 131, 132, 232
 Jung, Signor Guido, 63, 102, 107

K

Kamchatka, 17
 Kelly, Mayor, of Chicago, 195
 Kelly, Rev. Robert G., rector
 of the Catholic University of
 Chicago, 189
 King of Italy, the, 15, 43-45, 72,
 73, 74, 260, 278, 279
 Kingston, 175
 Kurile Islands, 17

L

Labrador, 24, 29, 148-159
 La Fontaine Park, 166
 Leprosy in Iceland, 121
 Libya, 63
 Lindbergh, Colonel, 151, 157, 204,
 205
 Lisbon, 257-259, 260
 Little Italy, 212
 Londonderry, 27, 28, 89, 99-105,
 111, 112
 Londonderry, Marquis of, 107-
 110
 Long Island, 198, 215
 Longo, Colonel, 20, 46, 56, 72, 206,
 237
Luce, the, 152

M

MacDonald, Ramsay, 63
 Mackay Building, 199
 Maddalena, Umberto, 16, 17, 18,
 40
 Magdalen Island, 160
 Maggiore, Lake, 45, 76
 Maine, 157, 164
 Manhattan, 198, 199, 200, 203,
 210
 Marchetti, Signor, 27, 40, 45, 61
 Marconi, Signor, 214, 241, 242
 Marie José, Princess, 272
 Marini, Major, 40, 238
 Massachusetts Bay, 225

Mediterranean Sea, 17, 71
 Michigan City, 179
 Michigan, Lake, 23, 178, 186, 193,
 196
 Middlesbrough, 93
 Milan, 75
 Monaco, Prince of, 34
 Montreal, 164-172, 181
 Moselle, River, 80
 Mount Stewart, Irish seat of the
 Marquis of Londonderry, 108-
 110
 Mundelein, Cardinal, 187
 Mussolini, 13, 42, 68, 169, 172,
 184, 185, 187, 188, 189, 212,
 214, 260, 276-277

N

Narrow Harbour, 159
 Natal, 242
 Navy Pier, Chicago, 171
 New Brunswick, 161, 164
 Newcastle-on-Tyne, flight over, 94
 Newfoundland, 17, 157, 159, 230,
 244
 New York, 17, 190, 198, 221
 Niagara Falls, flight over, 198
 Nibelungen gold, 80
 Nolan, General, 204

O

O'Brien, Mayor, of New York, 204
 O'Kane, Bishop, of Derry, 105
 Ontario, Lake, 175
 Orbetello, 19, 20, 27, 30, 33, 34,
 40, 46-51, 56, 59, 61, 62, 65, 67,
 71, 73, 74, 138, 173
 Orto Botanico, Rome, 275
 Ourterbridge, Major, 232

P

Pacelli, Cardinal, 187
 Padua, 45, 142

Palatine, the, 270, 275, 276
 Palazzo della Stampa, the, 273
 Panama, 17
 Paris, 60, 68
 Paolo Balbo, 49, 271
 Park Avenue, New York, 209
 Parker, General, 177, 194
 Paxafjörður Bay, 141
 Pellegrini, General, 50, 74, 206,
 211, 236, 241, 254, 259
 Persian Gulf, 17
 Petrucci, Signor, Italian Consul-
 General at Ottawa, 162
 Pezzani, Major, 45, 140, 142, 144
 Piedmont, 12
 Pinzwilur, an Iceland village, 134
 Pisa, Lido of, 19
 Ponies, Icelandic, shipped to
 Japan, 128
 Ponta Delgada, the Azores, 243,
 251, 254
 Pope, the, prays for success of
 Italian Squadron, 75; Chicago
 journalist's question to Balbo
 regarding possibility of the
 Pope visiting America, 193
Popolo d'Italia, 35
 Post, Wiley, round the-world
 flight with Gatty, 23, 220
 Potenziani, Prince, 183
 Prince Edward Island, 160, 161,
 229
 Punta Ala, 32, 62, 74
 Punta Europa, 263

Q

Quetta, Captain, 73, 206, 254
 Quintavalle, Sergeant, killed at
 Amsterdam, 80, 239
 Quirinal, the, 274

R

Rasmussen, Knud, the explorer,
 120, 131, 147
 Regagno, Captain, 21, 24, 25, 206

Renaissance, The, 169
 Revolution, Italian, 15, 30, 56,
 277
 Reykjanes, peninsula, 115
 Reykjavik, 27, 28, 51, 63, 107,
 115, 118, 140, 143, 172
 Rex, the, 200
 Rhine, Italian squadron's flight
 along, 79-81
 Rio de Janeiro, 15
 Robotti, Father, 221
 Rockefeller Building, 199
 Rome, 25, 48, 195, 235, 260, 263,
 270-279
 Roosevelt, Franklin, D. President,
 183, 189, 205-207
 Rosso, Signor Augusto, 173, 183,
 187, 188, 193, 208, 209, 218
 Russo, Signor, 171

S

S. 55, the, 27, 40, 45, 105
 S. 66, the, 63-65
 Sansa, Giorcio, Milan journalist,
 134
Saguenay, Canadian cruiser, 161
 Saint Hilda, monks of, 93
 Saint Patrick's Cathedral, New
 York, 221
 Saint Peter's, Rome, 48
 Sandwich Bay, 157
 San Vincenzo, 46
 São Miguel, 251
 Sardinia, 33
 Sbernadori, Lieutenant-Colonel,
 U.S. Air Attaché, 173
 Schellingwoude, 89, 90
 Schneider Trophy, 45, 242
 Scott, Sir Walter, 95, 110
 Senzadenari, Lieutenant-Colonel,
 83, 90
 Sesto Calende, 40, 63, 65
 Sharbaro, Judge, 188
 Shediak, 161-163, 168, 229
 Shoal Harbour, 231-235, 243
 S.I.A.I., three-bladed screw, 41

Sioux tribe of Red Indians make

Balbo a Chief, 192

Sky-scrapers, 195, 199, 200

Sormani, Dr., Mayor of Shediach,
162

"Song of the Po," 190

Sperry patents adopted, 41

Splugen, Mount, 77, 78

Squaglia, Lieutenant, fatal crash
at the Azores, 259

Starace, Signor Achille, Secretary
of the Fascist Party, 56, 57,
278

Statue of Liberty, 200, 210

St. Abb's Head, 95

St. Gotthard Pass, 61, 78

St. Hilaire, Lake, 165

St. John's, 239, 240

St. Lawrence River, 165, 170, 174

St. Michael's Bay, 159

Strasburg, flight over, 79

Sunderland, flight over, 94

Swanson, Admiral, 208

Swiss Government's attitude to-
wards the Air Armada, 61

T

Taliani, Francesco Maria, Com-
mander, 84

Tedeschini, General, 18

Tempesti, Colonel, 182

Tiber, the, 48, 267, 271

Toledo, 178, 197

Torre Ala, 62, 63

Tozzi, Signor, Italian Ambassador
at Lisbon, 259

Trieste, 40

Tripoli, 33

Tyrrhenian Sea, 32, 33, 34, 62,
73, 93, 115, 141

U

United States, 14, 15, 16, 164,
176, 204

V

Valentia, Co. Kerry, Ireland, 235,
236, 238

Valeria Balbo, 116

Valle, General, 48, 236, 239, 258

Val Moggia, 76

Val Toce, 76

Van Reed, Colonel, 89

Vatnagardar (Iceland), 128, 136,
137

Venus Genetrix, temple of, 275

Verazzono, Giovanni, Florentine
pioneer, 210

Via Dataria, Rome, 274

Via del Mare, 272

Via Nazionale, Rome, 274

Viareggio, 40

Via Venti Settembre, 274

Via XXIV Maggio, Rome, 274

Victoria Harbour, 176

Von Gronau, 23, 26, 28, 86, 88, 145

W

Waal, the, 81

Wall Street, 211

Warnemunde, 28, 29

Washington, 205-207

Webster, Dr. Clarence, 162, 163

Whitby, 93

Wilmette, the, 181, 182

Y

Ymuiden, 91

Z

Zuider Zee, 82, 90, 92

Zurich, 77, 78



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